

**BRINGING THEM TOGETHER:  
TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS  
AND  
TURKISH DEMOCRACY, 1945-1950**

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**May 2005**

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## ABSTRACT

### BRINGING THEM TOGETHER: TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND TURKISH DEMOCRACY, 1945-1950

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At certain times, the U.S. has been a complementary player in helping different countries to democratize without interfering in the affairs of the host country. During the Cold War, this policy owed to Washington's anti-Communist disposition. Most of the time, anti-Communism, freedom, and democracy were used interchangeably.

This thesis talks about such a case where the U.S. kept a close eye on the transition to democracy, namely Turkey from 1945 until 1950.

Primary U.S. policy towards Turkey at the onset of the Cold War was to keep the Soviet Union out. Meanwhile, Turkish leaders' democratic credentials, particularly those of Atatürk and İnönü, were the triggering factors for democratization. Treating the two traditionally separate phenomena, however, needs to be reconsidered.

The thesis will look at the historical record to analyze how Turkish democratization was a factor in the relations between the U.S. and Turkey at the beginning of the Cold War. Contrary to expectations, the U.S. did not exert pressure on Turkey to democratize as Turkey moved steadily on that path.

Also interestingly, Turkish statesmen and intellectuals saw democracy and the U.S. partnership as the manifestation of their modernization and Westernization. This point offers itself as another building block for the thesis.

Keywords: Democracy, democratization, Turkish-American Relations, Cold War.

## ÖZET

### BİR ARAYA GETİRMEK: TÜRK-AMERİKAN İLİŞKİLERİ VE TÜRK DEMOKRASİSİ, 1945-1950

Kayaoğlu, Barın

Yüksek Lisans, Tarih Bölümü

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Muhtelif zamanlarda, değişik ülkelerin içişlerine karışmadan demokratikleşmelerinde yardımcı olmak için ABD tamamlayıcı bir oyuncu işlevi görmüştür. Soğuk Savaş sırasında, bu politika özellikle Washington'un anti-Komünist eğilimine bağlıydı. Çoğu zaman, anti-Komünizm, özgürlük ve demokrasi eşanlamlı olarak kullanılıyordu.

Bu tez ABD'nin demokrasiye geçişi yakından izlediği böyle bir durumdan bahsetmektedir, yani 1945 ve 1950 yılları arasında Türkiye.

Soğuk Savaş'ın başlangıcında ABD'nin Türkiye'ye yönelik birincil politikası Sovyetler Birliği'ni dışarıda tutmaktır. Diğer yandan, Türk liderlerinin, özellikle Atatürk'ün ve İnönü'nün, demokrasiye bağlılıkları demokratikleşmeyi tetikleyen etkenlerdi. Yine de, bu olguları ayrı şekilde ele alma geleneğinin gözden geçirilmesi gerekmektedir.

Bu tez Türk demokratikleşmesinin Soğuk Savaş'ın başlangıcında Türkiye ile ABD arasındaki ilişkilere etkisini incelemek için tarihsel kayıtlara bakacaktır. Beklentilerin aksine, ABD Türkiye'ye demokratikleşmesi için baskı uygulamamıştır zira Türkiye zaten bu yolda ilerlemekteydi.

Ayrıca ilginçtir ki Türk devlet adamları ve aydınları demokrasiyi ve Amerikan ortaklığını çağdaşlaşmalarının ve Batılılaşmalarının bir ilanı olarak görmekteydiler. Bu nokta da bu tezin yapı taşlarından biridir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Demokrasi, demokratikleşme, Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, Soğuk Savaş.

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The honorable members of my thesis jury, namely Dr. Ted Kohn, Prof. Stanford Shaw, and Prof. Ergun Özbudun, have given me the thoughts and suggestions necessary for the final shape of this thesis. I thoroughly appreciate their input.

As a final word, Bilkent University is a blessing in disguise, both academically and socially, for those who are lucky enough to come here. Not every Bilkenter is aware of this fact. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Hocabey İhsan Doğramacı for struggling over so many decades to create this great institution. It gives me pain to leave this place that I have looked upon as my home for the past eight years. I am comforted, however, by the prospect that I will return someday. İnşallah (God willing).

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CA – Republic of Turkey, State Archives of the Prime Ministry, Republican Archives (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri, Cumhuriyet Arşivleri)

DP – Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti – DP)

FRP – Free Republican Party (Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası – SCF)

FRUS – Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States

IAT – Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Turkey, 1945-1949

RPP – Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – CHP)

TGNA – Turkish Grand National Assembly (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi – TBMM)

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

For the first time since post-World War II Germany and Japan, the United States has taken direct action to create democracies. For better or worse, the U.S. is directly involved in Iraq and Afghanistan for that purpose. In the past, the U.S. has been a complementary player in helping different countries to democratize. That is, the U.S. did not interfere with the affairs of the host country directly, but showed an interest in that country's aim to democratize.

This thesis talks about such a case where the U.S. kept a close eye on the transition to democracy, namely Turkey from 1945 until 1950. Several problems have led to the creation of this thesis. First of all, Turkish-American relations and Turkish democratization are still treated separately. Students of Turkish-American relations and Turkish democracy have shown only passing interest in looking at the connection between the two concepts.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, democratization has barely received any attention, and the association between the U.S. and Turkey has been mainly viewed as a strategic partnership. On the other hand, the transition to democracy had simply to do with Turkey's internal politics.

Both parties are right. The primary U.S. concern at the onset of the Cold War was to keep the Soviet Union out of Turkey, and Turkey was an indispensable asset

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, they have done so in rare instances. Paul Henze, *Turkish Democracy and the American Alliance* (Santa Monica: RAND), 1993; Hakan Yılmaz, "Democratization from Above in Response to the International Context," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 17, (1997): 1-38.

in American strategic calculations against the Soviets.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Turkish leaders' democratic credentials, particularly those of Atatürk and İnönü, were the triggering factors for democratization. The Turkish revolution, pushed through Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's reforms from 1923 until 1938 and carried on by his friend and successor İsmet İnönü, was the main reason for democratization.

Nevertheless, treating the two phenomena separately has to be reconsidered now as the record presents an alternative. The U.S. was genuinely interested in Turkey's democratization, but did not exert pressure on Turkey to that end. Turkey was already moving in that direction. The U.S. was observing the transition through its embassy in Ankara. With the Truman Doctrine, reference to Turkish democracy came to the forefront in the U.S.

This thesis will be structured as such: First, Turkey's republican ideology will be analyzed in order to appreciate its influence on Turkish democratization. Two schools of thought come to the forefront when one looks at the literature on Kemalism and Turkey's republican experience. The first group argues that Kemalism was essentially an authoritarian regime. In leading scholar Feroz Ahmad's words, the Turkish system after 1923 was based on a loose "alliance between the urban middle class and the intelligentsia, army officials, state officials, the landowners, and notables of Anatolia."<sup>3</sup> Turkey was run by a "monoparty," the Republican People's Party. "In this system it was not only the existence of a single party that was significant. More important was the absence of a separation between party and government: in fact, the party was the government."<sup>4</sup> Elections were held in the

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<sup>2</sup> Melvyn Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945-1952," *The Journal of American History* 71, No. 4. (Mar., 1985): 807-825.

<sup>3</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy, 1950-1975* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1977), 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

country periodically, but only RPP candidates were allowed to run. The people never elected their representatives directly, but only the electoral colleges that decided the result. Furthermore, significant pressure was exerted on the press; indeed, some of it was semi-official. It was the existence of this authoritarian “monoparty” system that categorized pre-1950 Turkey as undemocratic.

Another group studying Turkish politics argues that Kemalist ideology essentially aimed at building democracy in the country. Kemal Karpat argues that “the transition of Turkey’s one-party regime to a multi-party system was prepared...by the liberal concepts at the foundation of the Republic,” which finally became a reality through “the decision of the Republican Party government under the direct influence of İnönü.”<sup>5</sup> In that regard, both Atatürk and İnönü qualify as democrats.

In fact, transition to multi-party democracy was tried twice in Atatürk’s life. The time necessary for the reforms to consolidate and the harsh measures to maintain Turkish neutrality in World War II, however, precluded success. While the U.S. partnership was coming about after the war, so was democracy. There is no direct causality but still an interesting connection. At first Turkey’s democratization was not mentioned in U.S. government circles. But as the relations between the two countries improved, so did reference to each other’s democratic system.

Next, the thesis will look at the parallel evolution of Turkish democratization and Turkish-American relations from 1945 until 1950. Contrary to expectations, the U.S. did not exert pressure on Turkey to democratize. Turkey was already moving along that path. Nonetheless, there was a connection between Turkey and the U.S.

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<sup>5</sup> Kemal Karpat, *Turkey’s Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 137.

with respect to the latter's efforts to democratize and the former's commitment to halt Communism and promote "freedom" and "democracy."

To elaborate on this point, documents from the U.S. embassy in Ankara, reporting Turkey's steps in democratization, will be used. The discernment of the embassy on Turkey's political events from 1945 until 1949 is remarkable. What is further remarkable is how well the embassy reflected the events in Turkey without taking sides or passing judgements. One is curious why the information based on the embassy's reports were not emphasized more often by the Truman administration in order to attract Congressional and popular support in the U.S.

The thesis will also pay attention to how Turkish statesmen and intellectuals saw democracy and the U.S. partnership as the manifestation of their modernization and Westernization. There was continuous reference in Turkey to the "great American democracy" and how it was there to help Turkey resist "Communist expansion."<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the Americans were praising Turks for "the development of Western democracy in Turkey."<sup>7</sup> The Truman administration used the idea of anti-Communism synonymously with "freedom" and "democracy" and the Turkish case attested to this point.

The record posits an interesting connection between the U.S. and Turkey in the early years of the Cold War. On the one hand, the two countries were trying to increase their security. On the other hand, they also saw in each other the opportunity to foster their types of government.

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<sup>6</sup> Ambassador Edwin C. Wilson to the Secretary of State, telegram no. 195, "Istanbul press reactions March 14 to Truman speech," Ankara, March 14, 1947, *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Turkey, 1945-1949* (Washington: National Archives, 1983), microfilm, roll 2.

<sup>7</sup> Counselor of the Embassy Herbert S. Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1819, "Peker Government Wins Vote of Confidence in Secret Caucus of People's Party Assembly Group; Dissident Group within People's Party," Ankara, August 30, 1947, *IAT*, roll 4.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE PROBLEM: RETHINKING KEMALISM, DEMOCRACY, AND TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will reconsider the relationship between Kemalism<sup>1</sup> and democracy. It will be conceded that Kemalism was both an authoritarian *and* a liberal ideology. However, its ultimate objective was to establish a Western type of democracy in Turkey. This point must be borne in mind when looking at Turkish democratization from 1945 until 1950. Briefly treating the attempts to democratize from 1923 until 1945, the chapter will assess the authoritarian and liberal aspects of Kemalism. As Turkish democracy is paradoxically termed a “leader’s democracy,”<sup>2</sup> some emphasis shall also be placed on the ideas and policies of Atatürk and İnönü.

Next, the chapter will delineate the historiography on the Cold War and Turkish-American relations. Here, strategic calculations play a dominant role. As argued in the introduction, primary U.S. concern during the Cold War was to keep the Soviet Union and Communism out of Turkey. These concerns will be examined in order to provide the context in which Turkish democracy and Turkish-American relations interacted.

Finally, the chapter will look at the two studies that tried to establish the connection between Turkish democracy and Turkish-American relations. The first

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<sup>1</sup> Some sources also refer to Atatürkism (Atatürkçülük). This thesis will use Kemalism.

<sup>2</sup> Metin Heper and Sabri Sayarı, *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey* (New York: Lexington Books, 2002), i.

one, Paul Henze's *Turkish Democracy and the American Alliance*, argues that Turkey's political regime was not a concern for the U.S.<sup>3</sup> The second one, Hakan Yılmaz's "Democratization From Above in Response to the International Context," diametrically opposes Henze's thesis and posits that Turkish democratization was merely an outcome of the efforts to integrate Turkey with the U.S.-led Western world.<sup>4</sup> It was the U.S. interest in democracy that prompted Turkish policy-makers to resort to democratization, argued Yılmaz. The chapter will lay the groundwork for the thesis by arguing that the actual connection between Turkish democracy and Turkish-American relations is neither as separate as Henze claims, nor as externally-driven as Yılmaz asserts. The U.S. government was interested in Turkey's political regime. However, that interest did not find its way into U.S. policy towards Turkey. The U.S. did not induce Turkey to democratize. Turkish leaders were already working on the transition to democracy. The transition had as much to do with the ideals of Kemalism as with getting into "the Western club."

## **2.2 Kemalism and Democracy**

The relationship between Kemalism, the ideology of the Republic of Turkey, and democracy is a paradoxical one. On the one hand, Kemalism, named after Turkey's founding father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, introduced massive reforms. The institution of a republican government, the separation of the *mosque* and state, the abolition of religious law, its replacement with penal, commercial, and civic codes in the Western model, extension of suffrage to women, adoption of the Latin alphabet instead of the Arabic script are all well known.

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Henze, *Turkish Democracy and the American Alliance* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Hakan Yılmaz, "Democratization from Above in Response to the International Context," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 17, (1997): 1-38.

Equally well known, however, is the limit placed on political and social rights. The press, though still freer in comparison with those in Bolshevik Russia, Fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany, was still kept on a short leash by the government. Also, even though Atatürk attempted to institute multi-party politics twice in his life in 1924 and 1930, these trials failed and the “monoparty” system remained intact until 1945.

### **2.2.1 Experiments With Democracy Until 1945**

By the end of World War I, Turkey’s situation was desperate. Much of the country lay in ruins and was under foreign occupation. General Mustafa Kemal, who had made a name for himself in the Gallipoli theater during the war, organized a nationalist uprising in parts of Turkey spared from occupation. He eventually succeeded and proclaimed Turkey a republic in 1923, himself becoming president.

During the War of Liberation, one of the first things that Mustafa Kemal did was to convene a national parliament in Ankara in order to garner the people’s support for the war. The Turkish Grand National Assembly became a forum of hot debate during the war. Even though he was a popular figure among the deputies, Mustafa Kemal always made sure that the TGNA had its say on matters. Indeed, Mustafa Kemal acted on a mandate from the assembly, which could have been revoked any time. Arguably, the War of Liberation witnessed the initial experiments with democracy. Upon the proclamation of the republic, the TGNA was not dissolved and a bipartisan political system came into being.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> İhsan Güneş, *Birinci TBMM’nin Düşünce Yapısı, 1920-1923* (The Ideological Structure of the First TGNA, 1920-1923) (Eskişehir: Anadolu University, 1985; reprint, Ankara: İş Bankası Yayınları, 1995). For a detailed account of the War of Liberation, Stanford J. Shaw, *From Empire to Republic: The Turkish War of National Liberation, 1918-1923 A Documentary Study* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000).



Seeing that Turkey should never suffer such destruction again, Mustafa Kemal embarked on a vigorous program of modernization. Western phenomena, especially scientific techniques and political ideas, were introduced. The caliphate and sultanate were abolished, religious societies and schools were closed down, replaced with secular ones. Several years later, Mustafa Kemal adopted the Latin alphabet instead of the traditional Arabic script. Also to that end, Mustafa Kemal formed his own party, the Republican People's Party, while allowing the formation of the Progressive Republican Party. The idea was to create an environment amenable to political democracy while carrying out the reforms. Almost immediately, however, he realized that he could not strike a balance between democracy and his reforms. The Progressive Party began receiving support from those groups opposed to Mustafa Kemal's reforms, forcing him to close it down. Defending his methods in his *Büyük Nutuk* (Grand Address) in October 1927, he argued that "our new laws, the assurance of all our Nation's accomplishments in the social and economic realms, as well as the civic code, sanctioning women's liberty, were brought about at that time."<sup>6</sup>

Mustafa Kemal's second attempt to establish multi-party democracy came in 1930, right after the Great Depression. Arguing for the need of an opposition party to aid the RPP government in formulating healthier economic policies, Fethi (Okyar) established the Free Republican Party under the auspices of Mustafa Kemal, which the latter "presented to the public as a genuine opposition party."<sup>7</sup> At first, Mustafa Kemal assumed a neutral position vis-a-vis both parties. He was confident of the initial role that he bestowed on the FRP as a loyal opposition. However, the FRP, just

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<sup>6</sup> M. Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk* (Address) (İstanbul: Çağdaş, 1994), 410.

<sup>7</sup> Kemal Karpaz, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 65.

like the Progressive Party, became the focus of discontent. FRP rallies in the fall of 1930 became a platform for those disgruntled by the economic situation as well as the political reforms. Finally, “the RPP elite persuaded Mustafa Kemal, who initially had professed neutrality with respect to both parties, to change his position to support the Republican Party.”<sup>8</sup> Opposition to the reforms, coupled with economic discontent, forced Mustafa Kemal to shelve multi-party democracy once again.

Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk (father of Turks) with the adoption of the family-name code in 1934, died in 1938. His friend and close associate İsmet İnönü succeeded him. İnönü, just like Atatürk, believed that it was only through multi-party democracy that Turkey can safeguard the gains of the revolution.

Before the eruption of World War II, İnönü signaled his pledge for democracy. In a speech he delivered at İstanbul University on March 1939, he stated that “as long as the people’s control over the administration is not genuinely and physically consolidated, and that as long as the people do not attest to this, it cannot be argued that there exists a popular government.”<sup>9</sup> Even though multi-party democracy was some six years away, İnönü remained committed to the idea. The “Independent Group” in the TGNA and allowing independent candidates to run in elections indicated that democracy was not totally shelved.

World War II proved to be a major burden on Turkey. The press was significantly curbed. Critics of the governments, as well as Axis and Soviet sympathizers, were jailed. Martial law was declared in the country. Not until late-1947 was it fully abrogated. With the end of the war in Europe, President İnönü declared in May 19, 1945 that “as the restrictions necessitated by the precautionary

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 66-7.

measures of the war-time are gradually lifted, the principles of democracy will gain wider prevalence in our political and intellectual life.”<sup>10</sup>

### **2.2.2 Kemalism as an Authoritarian Ideology**

Notwithstanding the attempts for democratization, Kemalism was an authoritarian ideology. In Feroz Ahmad’s words, the political system that Mustafa Kemal formed was a “monoparty” system where a separation between the party and government did not exist. “In fact, the party was the government...In many cases, leaders of the provincial party were also governors of provinces, and almost all state officials became members of the RPP.” Even though there was the Grand National Assembly, the electoral system was “an indirect system in which the voters elected a college of electors who then elected their representatives to the Assembly. This system, in use until 1946, enabled the local elites to maintain their power and influence in the Assembly throughout the monoparty period.”<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, following the Great Depression of 1929, the economy came under the strict control of the government. According to Ertan Aydın, “the world depression with its economic and psychological consequences propelled Turkey into a new political search mostly grounded in radical and anti-liberal ideas.”<sup>12</sup> The absence of an entrepreneurial class, unlike Western democracies, resulted in the absence of a civil society in the country and further weakened claims to democracy.

The intellectual spectrum was also homogenized with the failure of the second multi-party experiment and liberal economic policies. The clash between

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<sup>9</sup> “İsmet İnönü’nün İstanbul Üniversitesi Konuşması - Mart 1939” (İsmet İnönü’s Speech at Istanbul University – March 1939) in Cemil Koçak, *Türkiye’de Milli Şef Dönemi, 1938-1945*, (The National Chief Era in Turkey, 1938-1945) (Ankara: Yurt, 1986; reprint, İstanbul: İletişim, 1996), 2:25.

<sup>10</sup> *Ulus*, May 20, 1945.

<sup>11</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy, 1950-1975* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1977), 1-3.

<sup>12</sup> Ertan Aydın, “The Peculiarities of Turkish Revolutionary Ideology in the 1930s: The Ülkü Version of Kemalism, 1933-1936” (Ph.D. diss., Bilkent University, 2003), 62.

rightist *Ülkü* and leftist *Kadro* movements arguably left the country in dearth of a liberal ideology. *Ülkü*'s "preoccupation with secularism and secular morality for the preparation of society to an 'ideal democracy' paradoxically became the basic obstacle in front of the Turkish democratic consolidation" and this "provided justification for postponing democracy to an uncertain stage of time."<sup>13</sup> For its part, *Kadro*'s stress on the single-party regime and a command economy found its way into the Turkish constitution as etatism. Even though both movements died away by the late 1930s, they became one of the intellectual foundations of Kemalist ideology.

Another reason for Kemalism to be labeled as an authoritarian ideology is the "chief system." Mustafa Kemal was bestowed the title of *Değişmez Genel Başkan* (Permanent Party Chairman) in the RPP Congress in 1927. Following his death in 1938, he was proclaimed *Ebedi Şef* (Eternal Chief), his successor İnönü assuming the title of *Milli Şef* (National Chief). Even though the title was mostly symbolic, it gave the Turkish system an authoritarian taste. The "chiefdom" was to remain in place until 1946.

At any rate, Atatürk was aware of his country's shortcomings. For him, the problems of backwardness and democratization could be remedied by modernization. Indeed, democracy, Westernization, and modernization meant the same thing. He reportedly said in the mid-1920s that "Turkey is going to build up a perfect democracy" and continued:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 5.

How can there be a *perfect* democracy with half the country in bondage? In two years from now, every woman must be freed from this useless tyranny. Every man will wear a hat instead of a fez and every woman will have her face uncovered; woman's help is absolutely necessary and she must have full freedom in order to take her share of her country's burden.<sup>14</sup>

U.S. Ambassador Joseph Grew, who served in Turkey from 1927 until 1932 observed Atatürk's second trial with democracy in 1930:

Atatürk began to think the single party as a sign of Turkey's inferiority in comparison with Europe and the West. American and European writers have in recent years devoted much space to the Turkish dictatorship which has often been described as Western in form but Oriental in fact. These descriptions have been brought to the Gazi's attention and he has not been pleased.<sup>15</sup>

### **2.2.3 Kemalism as a Liberal Ideology**

It was precisely Mustafa Kemal's displeasure with Turkey's failure in democratization and Kemalism's authoritarian characteristics that forced him to liberalize the country and its ideology. Of Kemalism's six pillars, namely, republicanism, secularism, populism, nationalism, revolutionism/reformism, and etatism, the first three pillars are most related to democracy.

These principles were installed into the constitution in 1937, but were not substantiated. Semih Tezcan argues that the "republican government is under the protection of the Constitution and cannot be changed. The principle of republicanism connotes libertarian democracy and the self-rule of the people, while striking out any possibility for a sultanate, caliphate, or dictatorship." Populism, meanwhile, "offers a democratic form of government. It means the self-rule of the people, the formation of a government based on the people, and that all actions must aim for the welfare and happiness of the people." As with secularism, it "is the principle where the individual

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<sup>14</sup> Grace Ellison, *Turkey To-Day* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1929),8; quoted in *ibid*, 8.

is free in his religious beliefs and behaviors under the freedom of conscience and where the administration of the state is free from religious reaction, thoughts and pressures.”<sup>16</sup>

These three ideals also translate to certain aspects of American democracy. Republicanism is evident. Populism, “the self-rule of the people, the formation of a government based on the people,” and “all actions must aim for the welfare and happiness of the people” resonates “a government by the people, for the people.” Secularism, for its part, is one of the mainstays of the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Perhaps the U.S. did not force Turkey to democratize in the 1940s because many of the principles deemed essential to American democracy were already part of Kemalism.

Dictatorship under Kemalism was never institutionalized. Indeed, it was considered harmful for Turkey. Furthermore, government terror did not exist and the press was relatively free from 1923 until World War II.<sup>17</sup>

British historian Andrew Mango defends Atatürk and Kemalism by putting them in the context of the interwar period: “Countries more prosperous than Turkey, with better-educated societies and a longer history as nation states, were unable to sustain democratic practices...That Atatürk favored democracy can be inferred from the fact that he admired France, Britain, and the United States rather than Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Bolshevik Russia.”<sup>18</sup> Turkish scholar Mustafa Yılmaz agrees: “It must be borne in mind that while there was a single-party rule in Turkey, totalitarian regimes were ruling most of the world and no other country in Europe,

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<sup>15</sup> Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1945*, (London: Hammond, Hammond & Co., 1953), 869; quoted in *ibid*, 67.

<sup>16</sup> Selim Tezcan, *Kemalist İdeoloji* (Kemalist Ideology) (İstanbul: Boğaziçi University, 1980), 4-10.

<sup>17</sup> Karpas, 138.

save France and Britain, was ruled by democracy.”<sup>19</sup> Arguably, Turkey resembled France, Britain, and the U.S. more than Italy, Germany, or Russia.

For Atatürk, the revolution and the authoritarian system that accompanied it were means to an end. He envisioned a Turkey governed by democracy. His reforms were directed towards that objective. As Kemal Karpat put it,

The justification, and the necessity for the strong government which prevailed in Turkey between 1923 and 1945 will be a matter of discussion for years to come. Whatever turn these discussions may take, one still can rightly question whether or not any other solution existed to bring about the urgent reforms Turkey needed. A society emerging from social and economic inertia, with a large section of the population dominated by fatalism, and without a large progressive and far-sighted intelligentsia, could not have done otherwise. Whatever faults one may attribute to Atatürk, one cannot say that he lacked enlightenment, and his enlightenment was Turkey’s great fortune.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, İsmet İnönü’s enlightenment and his influence on democracy must be stressed. Atatürk sowed the seeds of democracy while İnönü enabled it to blossom. According to Metin Heper, “if it were not for İnönü, it might have been difficult to institutionalize the said reforms, initiate multi-party politics in 1945, and prevent it from drifting to a long-term authoritarian regime in the 1950-71 period.”<sup>21</sup> İnönü’s decision to endorse Nihat Erim’s handful of liberals in the RPP (the so-called “Group of 35”) rather than Recep Peker’s conservative majority in the cumbersome period of 1945-50 determined the outcome of the transition to democracy.

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Mango, “Atatürk: Founding Father, Realist, and Visionary,” in *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*, ed. Metin Heper and Sabri Sayarı (New York: Lexington Books, 2002), 20.

<sup>19</sup> Mustafa Yılmaz, “Sened-i İttifak’tan Demokrat Partiye Demokrasi İçin Atılan Adımlar” (Steps Taken for Democracy from the Pact of Alliance to the Democrat Party), *KÖK Araştırmalar* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 50.

<sup>20</sup> Karpat, 138.

<sup>21</sup> Metin Heper, “İsmet İnönü: A Rationalistic Democrat,” in *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*, ed. Metin Heper and Sabri Sayarı (New York: Lexington Books, 2002), 26.

Overall, İnönü's main virtue was, in Dankwart Rustow's words, having the "singular honor of being the world's only statesman who voluntarily abdicated his dictatorial powers so as to make democracy possible."<sup>22</sup>

### **2.3 Turkey, the United States and the Cold War**

Before the end of World War II, relations between Turkey and the United States "could not be called intimate."<sup>23</sup> Although Turkey converged with the West in its foreign affairs after its League of Nations membership in 1932, this was mostly with Britain and France. With the outbreak of the war in 1939, Turkey signed treaties of alliance with the two countries but remained neutral almost until the end of the war.

The question of the Turkish Straits, one of the first sparks of the Cold War, was an issue between Turkey and the Soviet Union even before 1945. Following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Soviet Union and Germany that partitioned Poland, Turkish Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu went to Moscow in September 1939 to negotiate a non-aggression pact. Interestingly enough, the demands forwarded by the Soviets were identical to those that would be made in 1945.<sup>24</sup> The Soviets asked for a joint defense of the Straits, which was poised to guarantee them single-handed control over the strategic bottlenecks. Concerned for its sovereignty and independence, the Turkish government refused.

With the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, Turkish-Soviet relations deteriorated. Turkey's inability to cope with the passage of German

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<sup>22</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, "Modernization of Turkey," in *Social Change and Politics in Turkey: A Structural and Historical Analysis*, ed. Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden: Brill, 1973): 113; quoted in Metin Heper, *İsmet İnönü: The Making of a Statesman* (Leiden, Boston and Cologne: Brill, 1998), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, "Transmittal of Memorandum on Kemalist Policies and Present Trends," dispatch no.125, Ankara, March 30, 1948, *IAT*, roll 4.

<sup>24</sup> Haluk Ülman, *Türk-Amerikan Diplomatik Münasebetleri, 1939-1947* (Turkish-American Diplomatic Relations, 1939-1947) (Ankara: Sevinç, 1961), 25-27.



transport ships disguised as commercial shipping from the Straits, coupled with its neutrality, left the Soviets bitterly resentful of their neighbor's position.

Upon receiving the Turkish government's request for renewing the Treaty of Friendship of 1925, the Soviet Union replied on March 19, 1945 that the renewal was only possible if Turkey would agree to the joint defense of the Straits, as well as territorial concessions in eastern Turkey.<sup>25</sup> To that end, Stalin raised the question with Britain and the United States at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945. The three allies, without committing themselves to any course of action, promised to work in tandem for the revision of the Montreux Convention administering the regime of the Straits.

The demands from Turkey proved to be one of the greatest blunders in Soviet foreign policy. Along with the problems between the U.S. and the Soviet Union elsewhere, President Harry Truman started to complain of "babying the Russians."<sup>26</sup> Soviet policies inadvertently brought Turkey and the U.S. closer.<sup>27</sup>

U.S. policy towards Turkey underscored overall U.S. policy against the Soviet Union. The two intertwined elements that formed this policy were anti-Communism and geostrategy. According to Melvyn Leffler,

the fusion of ideological competition with geostrategic threat made American officials keenly sensitive to the vulnerability of their domestic political and economic institutions. In their view, configurations of power in the international system had a significant bearing on whether they could preserve individual liberties and a private market economy at home.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>26</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*, Give 'Em Hell Harry Series, ed. Robert H. Ferrell (Harper and Row, 1980; reprint, Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 80

<sup>27</sup> Stalin's Foreign Minister Molotov attested to this point in Albert Resis, ed., *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics: Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993), 73; quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know* (Oxford: Calrendon Press, 1997), 164.

<sup>28</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), vii.

Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson's position on Communism summarized American perceptions: "In Acheson's view 'Communism as a doctrine [was] fatal to a free society and to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Communism as an aggressive factor in world conquest [was] fatal to independent governments and to free peoples.'"<sup>29</sup> With respect to strategic concerns, the prospect of Eurasia falling under Soviet control was a significant danger: "If Eurasia came under Soviet domination, either through military conquest or political and economic 'assimilation,' America's only potential adversary would fall heir to enormous natural resources, industrial potential, and manpower."<sup>30</sup>

As for Turkey's importance, Loy Henderson, the State Department's Director of Near East and African Affairs, argued in October 1946 as follows:

Strategically, Turkey is the most important factor in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. By its geographical position, Turkey constitutes the stopper in the neck of the bottle through which Soviet political and military influence could most effectively flow into the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.<sup>31</sup>

Just like in Turkey, anti-Communism and geostrategy were of great concern for the U.S. in neighboring Greece. Greece's problems were more pressing than Turkey's. Even though there was no express Soviet pressure, Communist guerillas operating from neighboring Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia stirred trouble. The historical record acquits Stalin of supporting the guerillas during the Greek Civil War. The U.S., however, considered this as another move by Moscow to spread Communism, which eventually led to the declaration of the Cold War. President Truman announced in his historic speech before Congress on March 12, 1947 that "it

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<sup>29</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, "Negotiating from Strength: Acheson, the Russians, and American Power," in *Dean Acheson and the Making of U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. Douglas Brinkley (London: Macmillan, 1993), 177.

<sup>30</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48," *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (Apr., 1984): 357.

must be the policy of the United States to support the free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”<sup>32</sup>

The Truman Doctrine, as it came to be known, extended \$400 million worth of aid to Greece and Turkey. It was followed by the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Western Europe. American reasons for getting involved in Europe have been mentioned. But why were the Americans welcomed by these various European countries while the Soviets were not? In John Lewis Gaddis’s words, it was the Europeans’ “fear of getting something worse.”<sup>33</sup> The U.S. represented something much more acceptable for Europeans in general and Turks in particular. In Norwegian scholar Geir Lundestad’s words, the U.S. became “an empire by invitation”:

Unlike the Soviet Union, which frequently had to rely on force, the United States was generally encouraged to take a more active interest in the outside world. The American influence often went deeper than the Soviet exactly because Washington’s forms of control were more in accordance with the will of the local populations than were Moscow’s.<sup>34</sup>

#### **2.4 Previous Attempts to Link Turkish-American Relations and Turkish Democracy**

There are two schools of thought when looking at Turkish-American relations and Turkish democratization from 1945 until 1950. On the one hand, some scholars attribute Turkish transition to democracy strictly to the intrinsic characteristics of Turkey’s republican ideology. For this school, transition to democracy in the 1945-

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<sup>31</sup> Loy W. Henderson, “Memorandum on Turkey,” Washington, October 21 1946, *IAT*, Roll 1.

<sup>32</sup> “Recommendations on Greece and Turkey: Message of the President to Congress,” *Department of State Bulletin* 16, no. 403 (March 23, 1947): 536.

<sup>33</sup> Gaddis, 200.

<sup>34</sup> Geir Lundestad, “Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952,” *Journal of Peace Research* 23, no. 3 (Sep., 1986): 263. Indeed, the Turks literally welcomed Americans; Necmettin Sadak, “Aziz Dostlarımız, Hoş Geldiniz” (Welcome, Our Noble Friends), *Akşam*, April 5, 1946.

1950 period had nothing to do with Turkey's relations with the U.S. Paul Henze states that

the nature of [Turkey's] government was not a matter of controversy in the United States during this period. Atatürkism as a political philosophy aimed at modernization and adoption of Western civilization with all features Americans consider essential for democracy: a pluralist society, equal rights for all citizens, separation of church and state, a multiparty parliamentary system with rule of law and an independent judiciary.<sup>35</sup>

More recently, some scholars have taken a diametrically opposite view. Turkish democratization, they argue, was nothing but a tactic by Turkish statesmen in order to integrate Turkey into the Western alliance. Hakan Yılmaz maintains that

the [Turkish] state undertook democratic reform in response to the international context. Liberalizing and democratizing the regime was a political reform undertaken by the state leaders as an instrument in their overall foreign policy strategy of getting fully integrated with the newly emerging U.S.-led Western camp.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, Yılmaz argues that “the Turkish government's constant refusals to participate in the war on the Allied side and its conciliatory, and at times openly collaborative, policies towards Nazi Germany in the initial years of the war” made matters worse. As such, when the Soviets extended their demands on the Straits and territory, “the attitude of the Americans was at best indifferent to and at worst supportive for the Soviet position.”<sup>37</sup>

Even though Yılmaz has a point with respect to the motives of Turkish policy-makers (this thesis argues otherwise), his statement on American support for the Soviet position is misleading. Britain and the U.S. hesitated to recognize Soviet demands at Potsdam and thereafter. In the Moscow conference of foreign ministers in December 1945, British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin told his American

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<sup>35</sup> Henze, 8. Also see Ergun Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 14-24.

<sup>36</sup> Hakan Yılmaz, 2.

counterpart James Byrnes that “His Majesty’s Government could not be indifferent to a Russian threat to Turkey and would stand by her. We could not agree to the Soviet request for a base in the Straits and for the return of Kars and Ardahan.”<sup>38</sup> Byrnes agreed. The U.S. was already viewing Turkey as a strategic asset. There was no question of Americans to appease the Soviets on Turkey.

For their part, studies on strategic calculations do not mention democratization. No connection between Turkish democratization and U.S. strategy appears. The principal U.S. aim in converging with Turkey was to further U.S. power vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. These works focused on “the historical struggle for power along the Northern Tier as an important factor in the origins and development of what later became known as the Cold War,”<sup>39</sup> the Northern Tier being Greece, Turkey, and Iran. But that search for strategic gain also had a political consequence. Aware of the danger of counter-factualism, it is still a fruitful question to ask to what extent Turkey could have liberalized its system had it not been for its strengthened relations with the U.S., not to mention the prospect of falling under Soviet domination.

## 2.5 Conclusion

There is fertile ground that one can cover by looking at the interaction of the Turkish-American partnership and Turkey’s transition to democracy. Democratization was an item in the relations. But it came about due to the efforts of Turkish statesmen, particularly those of President İsmet İnönü. Many American observers attested to this fact. Democratization was neither fully internally-driven,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 5, 8.

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), 1945, Vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967): 630.

<sup>39</sup> Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), xv-xvi.

nor a mere tool at the hands of Turkish politicians to bring Turkey closer with the U.S. The U.S. observed the transition to democracy closely, which probably was the reason why it did not urge Turkey to democratize. Although U.S. policy towards Turkey was determined by strategic motives, that policy helped Turkey's transition to democracy. Indeed, democracy and anti-Communism were used synonymously in the period under question.

# **CHAPTER III**

## **THE FIRST PERIOD: DEMOCRACY RECEIVES MODEST ATTENTION, 1945-1947**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Until President Truman's historic speech in March 1947, the U.S. government, except for its embassy at Ankara, was not cognizant of the development of democracy in Turkey. Only after Truman declared the U.S. position vis-a-vis Greece and Turkey, and of course, the Soviet Union, to be the support of "free peoples" did the U.S. focus on democratization in Turkey.

Despite Turkish policy-makers' and the embassy's reference, Washington paid closer attention to the development of democracy in Greece while stressing Turkey's strategic importance. Arguably, this was a matter of agency. Following World War II, the U.S. was much more involved in Greece's domestic affairs than Turkey's. American officials monitored the 1946 general elections both in Greece and Turkey. However, Washington was much more directly involved in the Greek elections in March, sending observers in accordance with the Yalta arrangements. With the Turkish elections in July, however, Washington was informed through the embassy officials in Ankara who were observing only in an informal capacity. This could have been one reason why the U.S. gave modest attention to Turkey's democratization until the Truman Doctrine.

Another reason could have been that even the Americans were not so sure whether democratization was a viable option for Ankara. In his meeting with Senator Claude Pepper of Florida and Ambassador Edwin Wilson on October 12, 1945,

President İnönü reportedly said that “the day when I can sit in the Assembly as leader of the Opposition, I shall regard my role on behalf of Turkey as fulfilled.” However, Wilson was not so hopeful of the prospects of democracy in Turkey:

There are other competent observers who believe that while [the] President sincerely desires and intends to proceed on [the] road to political democracy, [the] international situation, particularly relations with Russia, will make it inadvisable at [the] present time to risk throwing [the] country into possible confusion and agitation of direct elections free of control by Peoples Party. They doubt whether such elections are likely to be held before 1947 when [the] elections would normally take place for now four-year term of deputies.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the Americans considered the July 1946 general elections to be unfair. Even though embassy officials acknowledged the voting “to be taking place in an orderly quiet fashion” in Ankara, İstanbul, and İzmir, they reported misconduct in the countryside.<sup>2</sup> The DP’s limited organization and the Turkish government’s inexperience with competitive elections, culminating in the RPP’s questionable victory, must have left the U.S. policy-makers in doubt with respect to Turkey’s experiment with democracy.

This chapter will concentrate on the interaction of Turkish democratization and Turkish-American relations from 1945 until the Truman Doctrine in March 1947. The periodization is due to the modest attention that Turkish democratization received from the U.S. government. Turkey did not receive any inducements from the U.S. to democratize. Moreover, Turkish democracy was not mentioned in the U.S. As it will be seen in the next chapter, reference to Turkey’s democracy would become much more conspicuous after the Truman Doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, telegram no.1352, Ankara, October 19, 1945, *IAT*, roll 1.

<sup>2</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 992, “Turkish Election Day, July 21, 1946,” Ankara, July 21, 1946, *IAT*, roll 1.



This was a time when the U.S. still did not have a definite strategy against the Soviet Union. Both sides hoped that they could reach some sort of an accommodation over the Turkish Straits, Germany, and eastern Europe. Once the prospect of a settlement failed, the Cold War began.

### **3.2 Turkish-American Relations and Turkish Democracy From the End of the War Until the Truman Doctrine**

In February 1945, Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt delineated several reasons why the Turkish regime “has been suffering a consistent diminution in popularity and public confidence, particularly since the outbreak of war in September, 1939.” Turkey’s problems were the ineffective bureaucratic mechanism, economic hardship owing to inflation, corruption, the failure of industrialization, and the rigidity of the educational system. Steinhardt further situated “the lack of freedom of the press and of speech” and “the merest lip-service to democratic forms, ‘elections’ of deputies being in fact appointments by the single party machine” as Turkey’s problems with democracy. Lack of freedom of the press was obvious:

Newspapers which fail to conform to the standards laid down by the Press Bureau are unable to remain in existence, and the slightest criticism of the regime or deviation from the official ‘line’ is likely to result in a suspension. For example, the leftist newspaper ‘Tan’ was suspended on August 12<sup>th</sup> for demanding a purge of pro-Axis officials, and the newspaper ‘Vatan’ on August 30<sup>th</sup> because it ran several articles demanding greater democratization of the Turkish government...Those Turks who have traveled or studied abroad, or who have observed the freedom of the press existing in the democracies and guaranteed in the Atlantic Charter, cannot but be dissatisfied with the strict control of the press exercised in their own country.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, Steinhardt gave İnönü some credit: “In all fairness, it should be stated that President İnönü has made several tentative efforts to introduce certain measure

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<sup>3</sup> Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1086, “Popularity and Strength of the Present Turkish Regime,” Ankara, February 19, 1945, *IAT*, roll 1.

of democracy...During the elections of 1939 and 1943, the practice of allowing the voters some latitude...was introduced.”<sup>4</sup>

İnönü was aware of his country’s problems. Even before the end of the war in Europe, he gave the following instructions to Foreign Minister Hasan Saka, en route to the San Francisco Conference in April 1945:

The Americans may ask you when we will establish a multi-party regime. You will give the following answer to the question: ‘In the history of the Turkish Republic, Atatürk was the great reformer. The role of İnönü will be to institutionalize the reforms and to establish full democracy, which was also the intention of Atatürk himself. İnönü would like to have done this before. The many dangers and problems that came with war held him back. It is the greatest desire of the President to achieve this goal as soon as the war will be over.’<sup>5</sup>

In his interview with the Reuters correspondent on May 16, Saka followed İnönü’s line: “As a political institution, the Republican regime is determinedly progressing on the way to modern democracy. Our Constitution can be compared with the constitutions of the most advanced countries and surpasses many others.” Saka added that every democratic tendency would be allowed to develop in Turkey after the war.<sup>6</sup>

Back in Turkey, signs of democratization were coming into existence. On May 19, on the occasion of Youth and Sports Day, İnönü referred to the Grand National Assembly as “our greatest democratic institution,” which “proved in a brilliant manner that the democratic regime has educated the people in liberal ideas

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Oğuz Ünal, *Türkiye’de Demokrasinin Doğuşu. Tek Parti Yönetimiden Çok Partili Rejime Geçiş Süreci* (The Birth of Democracy in Turkey. The Transition from the One-Party Government to the Multi-Party Regime) (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1994), 123-27; quoted in Hakan Yılmaz, “Democratization from Above in Response to the International Context,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 17, (1997): 9.

<sup>6</sup> “San Fransiskodaki Murahhas Heyetimizin Reisi Dışışleri Bakanımız Hasan Sakanın Reuters Muhabirine Verdiği Beyanat” (The Interview Granted to the Reuters Correspondent by our Foreign Minister Hasan Saka, Chief of Our Delegation at San Francisco), *Ayın Tarihi* (May 1945): 633.

and has taught them to develop in a free society without falling to anarchy or pulling political discussion down to the level of mob rumors.”<sup>7</sup>

Even the opposition within the RPP caught the mood. During the debates on the UN Charter in the assembly on August 15, Adnan Menderes ascribed an important role to the charter: “By ratifying the UN Charter, we do not commit ourselves to anything that is not consistent with our Constitution. However, there are undeniable inconsistencies between our Constitution and the *de facto* state of affairs in the country.” Menderes further argued for the need to take Turkey’s ratification of the charter as an opportunity to enhance democracy.<sup>8</sup>

Menderes, together with Celal Bayar, Refik Koraltan, and Fuat Köprülü, fellow members of the opposition in the RPP, had declared their *Dörtl  Takrir* (Manifesto of the Four) in June. The Manifesto called for the establishment of parliamentary control over the government, granting the citizens their rights envisaged by the Constitution, and for the reorganization of the RPP along these principles.<sup>9</sup>

According to Hakan Yılmaz, “President İnön ’s response to these demands was an even stronger signal for democratization.” On the opening day of the TGNA on November 1, he argued that the lack of an opposition party was the only shortcoming of the Republic and he invited the dissidents within the RPP to form their own political party.<sup>10</sup>

The dissidents left the RPP and formed the Democrat Party in January 1946. The U.S. embassy foresaw the formation of the new party in November and

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<sup>7</sup> *Ulus*, May 20, 1945.

<sup>8</sup> Metin Toker, *Demokrasimizin İsmet Paşalı Yılları, 1944-1973. Tek Partiden Çok Partiye, 1944-1950 Yılları* (Our Democracy in the Times of İsmet Paşa) (Ankara: Bilgi, 1990), 71-2.

<sup>9</sup> Hıfzı Topuz and Hüsamettin Ünsal, ed., *Cumhuriyet’in Beş Dönemeci* (Five Turning Points of the Republic) (İzmir: Sergi, 1984), 135-6; quoted in Hakan Yılmaz, 10.

suggested that “the platform of the proposed new party is said to be based on a return to the pure program of Atatürk, liberalized and developed to meet present conditions.”<sup>11</sup> It was an interesting analysis, for Atatürk had replaced İnönü with Bayar as Prime Minister in 1937, largely due to Bayar’s liberal economic policies, which Atatürk preferred.

İnönü set the country’s direction towards greater democracy, even though he did not think that the country was ready for it. John Matthew Vander-Lippe, Jr. argues that “İnönü offered several reasons why he did so. First, being committed to the goal of modernizing Turkey, he thought the country should have a democratic regime as soon as possible, because better policies would be formulated from a clash of ideas.” Second, “he had been troubled by the fact that under the single-party regime, people at different echelons of government were involved in inappropriate deeds and he was unaware of such behavior.”<sup>12</sup> İnönü’s understanding of modernization, together with continuing Atatürk’s mission, led him to liberalize the political system.

İnönü himself downplayed the influence of foreign policy considerations on his decision. In an interview with Dankwart Rustow in 1954, he first denied the relevance of foreign policy considerations, but “then he visibly relaxed, and with a shrewd smile added: ‘And suppose I had been swimming with the stream, that too, is a virtue.’”<sup>13</sup> Years later Rustow himself recognized that İnönü’s main virtue was

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<sup>10</sup> Yılmaz, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 401, “Probable Impending Formation of Demokratik Halk Partisi (Democratic Peoples’ Party),” Ankara, November 30, 1945, *LAT*, roll 1.

<sup>12</sup> John Matthew Vander-Lippe, Jr., “The Decade of Struggle: The Presidency of İsmet İnönü and Turkish Politics, 1938-1950” (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1993), 429; quoted in Metin Heper, “İsmet İnönü: A Rationalistic Democrat,” in *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*, ed. Metin Heper and Sabri Sayarı (New York: Lexington Books, 2002), 35.

<sup>13</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Turkey’s Experience in Historical and Comparative Perspective,” in *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, ed. Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 245; quoted in Ekavi Athanassapoulou,

having the “singular honor of being the world’s only statesman who voluntarily abdicated his dictatorial powers so as to make democracy possible.”<sup>14</sup> There was no inducement from the U.S. towards Turkey to democratize. Its primary interest in Turkey was stability and keeping out the Soviet Union, although interest in democracy would come to the forefront as Turkey democratized.

With its advent, the DP immediately became the locus of those discontented with the RPP. A rigorous debate followed. For the DP, the repressive clauses in the electoral, police, and press laws had to be modified. The political system had to be redefined according to the realities of the new era. For most members of the RPP, change had to come gradually. In Yılmaz’s words, RPP members hoped that the DP would play “the part of an ornament for democracy,” without laying claims for power for “at least 40 to 50 years.”<sup>15</sup>

At the Grand Congress of the RPP on May 10, 1946, İnönü declared the necessary changes in order to consolidate a democratic regime. First, the ban for establishing class-based associations and parties had to be revoked. Second, instead of the electoral college, a single-stage electoral system had to be introduced. Third, the title of “national chief” had to be replaced with “party chairman.” Finally, free elections had to be held.<sup>16</sup> The RPP Congress followed suit. Furthermore, it decided for the general elections to be held in July, which were normally scheduled for 1947, and the local elections at the end of the month. This shocked the DP. On the one hand, it was fighting the stringent laws on political parties and on the other hand was

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*Turkey – Anglo-American Security Interests, 1945-1952: The First Enlargement of NATO* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 1999), 73.

<sup>14</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, “Modernization of Turkey,” in *Social Change and Politics in Turkey: A Structural and Historical Analysis*, ed. Kemal Karpat et al (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 113; quoted in Metin Heper, *İsmet İnönü: The Making of a Statesman* (Leiden, Boston and Cologne: Brill, 1998), 8.

<sup>15</sup> Yılmaz, 12.

<sup>16</sup> *Ulus*, May 11, 1946.

still unknown to the constituents. As such, it refused to participate in the local elections in protest. Fuat Köprülü, in an interview with the *New York Times* correspondent Aslan Humbaracı on May 14, accused the RPP government of resorting to anti-democratic methods. Ambassador Wilson reported the interesting reactions to Köprülü by the pro-RPP press that he was playing “into the hands of Russia by declaring that all the enemies of Turkey are mobilized for the purposes of inciting Anglo-Saxon public opinion against Turkey and of isolating Turkey from the Western world.”<sup>17</sup> This report reflects how some Turkish intellectuals saw democratization as Turkey’s convergence with the Western world.

Concurrent with these developments in Turkey, the U.S. displayed more interest in Greece’s internal affairs. The report of the “Allied Mission for Observing the Greek Elections,” comprising American, British, and French observers, considered the general elections of March 31 “on the whole free and fair,” with the results representing “a true and valid verdict of the Greek people” and “capable of standing comparison as to decorum with general elections in France, Great Britain, and America.” Moreover, “complete freedom of the press of Greece was found to characterize the election period.”<sup>18</sup> A few days before the elections, Secretary of State James Byrnes said that “as friends of the Greek people, we are interested in seeing them elect a representative Government. We believe that only when the Greek people have freely expressed their will at the polls...can the work of reconstruction, which is so vital to the welfare of Greece, go forward satisfactorily.”<sup>19</sup> Greece was

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<sup>17</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 832, “Statements of Deputy Fuat Köprülü, Democratic Party Leader, Concerning Alleged Irregular Activities of Turkish Government Affecting Democratic Party,” Ankara, May 21, 1946, *IAT*, roll 1.

<sup>18</sup> “Statement of the Allied Mission for Observing the Greek Elections,” *Department of State Bulletin* 14, no. 355 (April 21, 1946): 671, 673.

<sup>19</sup> “American Mission to Observe Greek Elections,” *Department of State Bulletin* 14, no. 352, (March 31, 1946): 529.

continuously praised in U.S. official circles. Indeed, its democracy was stressed much more than its strategic significance. This posits an interesting contrast between the outlook towards the two countries which were the greatest cornerstones in the U.S.'s plans against the Soviets in the eastern Mediterranean.

In the meantime, the U.S. was more interested in the Turkish Straits, "the stopper in the neck of the bottle," than Turkish democracy. As early as mid-1945, President Truman determined the "selfish control of the waterways of Europe" as "one of the persistent causes of wars in Europe in the last two centuries."<sup>20</sup> Accepting the Soviet propositions for revising the Montreux Convention, the U.S. forwarded four principles. First, the Straits had to be open to the merchant vessels of all nations at all times. Second, the Straits had to be open to the transit of the warships of Black Sea powers at all times. Third, passage through the Straits had to be denied to the warships of non-Black Sea powers at all times, except with the specific consent of the Black Sea powers or except when acting under the authority of the United Nations. Fourth, certain changes had to be affected in order to modernize the Montreux Convention, such as the substitution of the United Nations for the League of Nations and the elimination of Japan as a signatory.<sup>21</sup> Turkey announced that it would "participate in an international conference on the Dardanelles and accept any decisions reached there," given that "Turkey's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity are not infringed."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Department of State Bulletin* 13, no. 320 (Aug. 12, 1945): 212; quoted in Harry N. Howard, "Some Recent Developments in the Problem of the Turkish Straits, 1945-1946," *Department of State Bulletin* 16, no. 395 (January 26, 1947): 143.

<sup>21</sup> "Concerning Revision of Montreux Convention," *Department of State Bulletin* 13, no. 333 (Nov. 11, 1945): 766.

<sup>22</sup> Turkish Embassy, Washington, Press Release no. 1, Feb. 1946; quoted in Harry N. Howard, "Some Recent Developments in the Problem of the Turkish Straits, 1945-1946," 145.

The Soviet note of August 7, 1946 to the U.S. was mostly in line with the American position, except on two important items. First of all, the Soviet Union wanted the formation of a new regime by the Black Sea littorals. Second, it argued that the defense of the Straits should be jointly assumed by Turkey and the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup> In response, the U.S. asserted that “the Soviet note does not appear to envisage a revision of the Montreux Convention...but rather the establishment of a new regime which would be confined to Turkey and the other Black Sea powers.” The U.S. reply of August 19 further stated that

it is the firm opinion of this Government that Turkey should continue to be primarily responsible for the defense of the Straits. Should the Straits become the object of the attack or threat of attack by an aggressor, the resulting situation would constitute a threat to international security and would clearly be a matter for action on the part of the Security Council of the United Nations.<sup>24</sup>

The exchange of notes soon died down without the revision of the Montreux Convention. However, the Soviets would not officially renounce their claims on the Straits and eastern Turkey until Khrushchev's incumbency.

While these events were taking place in the international scene, general elections were held in Turkey on July 21. Once more an RPP majority dominated the assembly with the DP winning some 64 seats. Several reasons can be attributed as to why the DP performed so poorly. Two months after its establishment, the DP had opened branches in sixteen provincial seats out of the existing sixty-three provinces, in thirty-six district seats, and in several villages.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, this organization was not enough to warrant an electoral victory, which probably was the reason why

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<sup>23</sup> “Position on Question of the Turkish Straits---Exchange of Notes Between the Soviet Chargé d'affaires and Acting Secretary Acheson,” *Department of State Bulletin* 15, no. 374 (September 1, 1946): 421.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Kemal Karpat, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 152.



the RPP rescheduled the elections to an earlier date. Indeed, the DP was barely able to nominate 250 candidates for the 450-seat assembly.

Even though the DP did not lack popular support, the people's resentment for their economic conditions led to low voter turnout, accounting for the DP's poor performance. The embassy witnessed this phenomenon. Third Secretary Richard Gnade, who visited Eskişehir and İzmit in early-July, reported that "often I met with considerable skepticism as to any change for the better which might come about should the Democrats win." Gnade mentioned an interesting conversation with a man wondering "who cares who wins – Republicans or Democrats – the generals in the Army won't change, and they are the ones who really set policy in the country."<sup>26</sup>

On election day, the embassy reported "no evidence of pressure being put on the voters." At the polling stations they visited in Ankara, İstanbul, and İzmir, "the voting seemed to be taking place in an orderly quiet fashion." However, "in the country districts where the kaymakam (district administrators) and the gendarmerie commanders are in complete control, there have been numerous press reports of arbitrary action by these local officials."<sup>27</sup>

The elections of July 1946 were conducted in an atmosphere of relative freedom. In fact, in comparison to present-day Turkey, where the press is barred from estimating electoral results in order not to influence voters, a quick look at the newspapers of July 1946 reveals the freedom they enjoyed. Before the elections, the pro-opposition *Vatan* reported that the DP had a high chance to win in many

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<sup>26</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 948, "Election Campaign Impressions from Two Smaller Turkish Cities," Ankara, July 9, 1946, *IAT*, roll 1.

<sup>27</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 992, "Turkish Election Day, July 21, 1946," Ankara, July 21, 1946, *IAT*, roll 1.

provinces. Its chief editor, Ahmet Emin Yalman, referred to July 21 as “judgement day.”<sup>28</sup>

However, the general elections of 1946 were hardly the finest hour of Turkish democracy. The İstanbul Martial Law Command issued an order to pro-opposition papers to stop their attacks on the government.<sup>29</sup> Counselor of the embassy Herbert Bursley recorded electoral misconduct as follows:

Ballots were in most cases burned within twenty-four hours after the polling, so that no recount was possible. It is apparently in the election committees, both in the precincts and in the district and provincial tabulation centers, that the Republican People’s Party organization in a number of places was able to alter the figures to give the victory to People’s Party candidates, regardless of how the actual count for each candidate stood.<sup>30</sup>

Following the elections, İnönü started looking for a prime minister; someone who could both be conciliatory towards the DP but also firm enough to withstand the storms of multi-party democracy. Failing to find a suitable candidate, he turned to the most unlikely character of Recep Peker who was not exactly an advocate of multi-party democracy.

Why did İnönü choose Peker? The answer probably lies in Peker’s background. Peker is one of the most eccentric characters of Turkish political history. He had suggested Atatürk to install the “Republican” clause in the party’s title in 1924. Owing to his organizational skills and vigorous character, he served several times as secretary-general of the RPP and as minister in different governments throughout the 1920s and 30s. Even though Atatürk was fond of him, Peker’s 1936 report, which proposed the reorganization of the RPP along the lines of the Italian Fascist Party, met Atatürk’s bitter hostility. Atatürk reportedly exclaimed

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<sup>28</sup> Ahmet Emin Yalman, “Hesap Günü” (Judgement Day), *Vatan*, July 20, 1946.

<sup>29</sup> “Sıkıyönetimin Tebliği” (Declaration of the Martial Law), *Vatan*, July 25, 1946.

“what the hell has Recep done again?” and told his aide Hasan Rıza Soyak that “my intention is that should an anti-monarchical current take over the world in the future, even those who demand a sultanate can form a party in this country.”<sup>31</sup> Whereas he fell from Atatürk’s grace, Peker remained an important figure in the party. When the test of multi-party democracy came in 1946, İnönü probably wanted to have a “bitter” figure leading the government so that he could play the “sweet” towards the DP.<sup>32</sup>

Even though Peker was not a champion of democracy, he still propagated it in his encounters with prominent Americans. In one of his meetings with Ambassador Wilson, Peker explained “that the nations should be ruled by supermen is not natural.” Moreover, he saw it his duty “to set up a Turkish state apparatus automatically working on the basis of Democratic principles.”<sup>33</sup>

In a meeting with Harold Lasswell of the State Department’s Division of News and Cultural Affairs on September 3, 1946, Peker expressed his enthusiasm for “America to abandon its policy of isolationism and to become the order-setter in world affairs,” and “how Turkey led the forefront in this sentiment.” Upon Lasswell’s comment that his division was interested in the freedom of the press and that he had visited Germany, Austria, Rumania, Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia before coming to Turkey, Peker responded that “as Turkey had nothing to hide, the press was free to an incomparable degree with the said countries.” Lasswell concurred with Peker and mentioned “how the steps taken in

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<sup>30</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 992, “Turkish Election Day, July 21, 1946.”

<sup>31</sup> Teoman Gül, *Türk Siyasal Hayatında Recep Peker* (Recep Peker in Turkish Political Life) (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1998), 29.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>33</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1055, “Transmission of Speech Excerpts Showing Attitudes of New Turkish Prime Minister Peker,” Ankara, August 21, 1946, *IAT*, roll 9.

Turkey towards freedom of the press was well-received in America” and added that “such steps also made things easier for them.”<sup>34</sup>

A few days later, in another meeting with Jeanette Rankin, former member of Congress, Peker remarked that “it was a source of joy and admiration for America to abandon isolationism and to serve the ideology of humanity with its material, moral, and technical might in the postwar world.” Peker ironically praised America for “demonstrating that it was willing to fight to preserve freedom,” probably unaware that he was talking to the only member of the U.S. Congress who voted against the declaration of war in December 1941. Learning that Rankin was on her way to visit a friend in Tarsus, Peker jokingly suggested that maybe she would work for the RPP there, to which Rankin said “I will work for you in America.”<sup>35</sup>

The reception of Turkish democratization in the American press was not always so supportive of democratization. An editorial which appeared on the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* on August 3, 1946, apparently “stated that for a small power like Turkey, democracy was almost an unattainable luxury, and that Turkey needed a strong government even if the freedom of the individual were not guaranteed as in the United States.” The embassy reported that the editorial infuriated the opposition’s newspapers and was challenged by pro-RPP *Ulus*. Ahmet Emin Yalman expressed to the embassy staff “his amazement that an American newspaper should so misunderstand and misrepresent the situation in Turkey.” An unsigned editorial on Yalman’s *Vatan* on August 5 called the paper’s writer “Fascist-

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<sup>34</sup> Vedit Uzgören (Private Secretary of the Prime Minister) to Nedim Veysel İlkin (General Manager, Bureau of Press & Broadcast) and Hakkı Uludağ (Private Secretary of the Minister of Education), “Script of the meeting between Harold Dwight Lasswell (representative of William Benton, Division of News and Cultural Affairs, State Department) and Prime Minister Peker,” Ankara, September 5, 1946, *CA*, 30.01/11.65.5.

<sup>35</sup> Vedit Uzgören (Private Secretary of the Prime Minister) to Nedim Veysel İlkin (General Manager, Bureau of Press & Broadcast), “Script of meeting between Prime Minister Peker and Jeanette Rankin,” Ankara, September 10, 1946, *CA*, 30.01/101.624.9.

spirited” and “absolutely in the dark insofar as the maturity and ideals of the Turkish nation are concerned.” For its part, *Ulus* printed the editorial on August 5, transmitted by the Anatolian Agency from Washington and bluntly commented that “we do not agree with the friendly American newspaper. There will not only be a strong government in Turkey, but also laws to safeguard the freedom of Turkish citizens, as in the United States.”<sup>36</sup>

These episodes suggest that starting in mid-1946, Turkish democratization began to receive some attention in the U.S. and presented a medium of dialogue between the two countries. However, the connection was not as intense as it would be with the declaration of the Truman Doctrine. At this point, strategic factors were still the U.S.’s primary concern. Based on the August 23 memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Loy Henderson, Director of the State Department’s Near East and African Affairs, considered Turkey “the most important factor in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East” and added that “by its geographical position, Turkey constitutes the stopper in the neck of the bottle through which Soviet political and military influence could most effectively flow into the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.”<sup>37</sup>

As expected, the relations between the Peker government and the DP were constantly uneasy. Peker’s disregard for the opposition, economic mismanagement, and the crass behavior of a majority of RPP members acquainted with the methods of the single-party days, caused a clash between the RPP and DP. The clash evolved into a political crisis in December. Adnan Menderes delivered a powerful but respectful speech during the hearings on the budget, criticizing the Peker

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<sup>36</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1015, “Resentment Caused by Editorial On Turkey in Philadelphia Evening Bulletin,” Ankara, August 8, 1946, *IAT*, roll 1.

<sup>37</sup> Loy W. Henderson, “Memorandum on Turkey,” Washington, October 21 1946, *IAT*, roll 1.

government's economic policies. In response, Peker appeared before the assembly and called Menderes a "psychopath," which resulted in the immediate withdrawal of DP deputies in protest.<sup>38</sup>

To defuse what could have become a major crisis, President İnönü stepped in on behalf of the DP, assuring them that their presence in the assembly was much needed. Commenting on the event, Ambassador Wilson praised İnönü for "his determination to establish Western democracy in Turkey, which gained him the favor of the opposition."<sup>39</sup>

### 3.3 The Truman Doctrine

In many respects, President Truman's speech before the joint session of Congress on March 12, 1947 represents the U.S.'s declaratory commitment to democracy and the firing shot of the Cold War. Reference to Greece's democratic credentials was straightforward in what later became the Truman Doctrine: "Greece must have assistance if it is to become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy...No other nation is willing and able to provide the necessary support for a democratic Greek Government." Regarding the problems of governance in Greece, Truman argued that

one of the chief virtues of a democracy...is that its defects are always visible and under democratic processes can be pointed out and corrected. The Government of Greece is not perfect. Nevertheless it represents 85 percent of the members of the Greek Parliament who were chosen in an election last year. Foreign observers, including 692 Americans, considered this election to be a fair expression of the views of the Greek people.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Haluk Kılçık, ed., *Adnan Menderes'in Konuşmaları, Demeçleri, Makaleleri* (The Speeches, Addresses, and Articles of Adnan Menderes) (Ankara: Demokratlar Kulübü, 1991), 142.

<sup>39</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, dispatch no.1317, "Withdrawal and Return of Democrat Party Deputies in Grand National Assembly," Ankara, December 31, 1946, *IAT*, roll 1.

<sup>40</sup> "Recommendations on Greece and Turkey---Message of the President to the Congress," *Department of State Bulletin* 16, no. 403 (March 23, 1947): 535.

As with Turkey, however, no such points were made, despite the fact that it had held relatively free elections the previous year. In contrast, Truman maintained that “the circumstances in which Turkey finds itself today are considerably different from those of Greece...nevertheless, Turkey now needs our support.”<sup>41</sup> This essentially meant that Turkey was not a democracy, but its independence was under threat and the U.S. had to help.

Some scholars have been skeptical towards President Truman’s inclusion of Turkey with Greece: “Congressional approval of aid to Turkey was assured primarily because of association with concern over Greece,” argues George Harris.<sup>42</sup> For Melvyn Leffler, Turkey, despite being in no imminent danger, was thrown into the lot with Greece in order to gain a leverage against the Soviet Union and thwart the “eventual projection of Soviet power into the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East.”<sup>43</sup>

As far as the Turks were concerned, however, the Truman Doctrine qualified as an American commitment to Turkish democracy. Nihat Erim argued in his column in *Ulus* on March 13 that there was a deeper meaning for the U.S. to extend a helping hand to Turkey: The fact that the U.S. wanted to protect Turkey’s independence signified its appreciation of its democratic character.<sup>44</sup> On March 15, Erim added that “the National Assembly method, characterized by free debate and multi-party politics, could have degenerated as it did elsewhere.” However, the Turkish regime “did not accept dictatorship, violence, and terror in any form” and claimed that

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> George Harris, *Troubled Alliance; Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945-1971*. (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972), 26.

<sup>43</sup> Melvyn Leffler, “Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945-1952,” *The Journal of American History* 71, No. 4. (Mar., 1985): 811.

<sup>44</sup> Nihat Erim, “Amerika’nın Kararlı Tutumu” (America’s Determined Position), *Ulus*, March 13, 1947.

“those who look at Turkey from abroad must have seen its position.”<sup>45</sup> Others considered Truman’s speech as “the most important turning point in world politics at this century”<sup>46</sup> and labeled the U.S. as a “peacemaker.”<sup>47</sup> *Son Telgraf* proclaimed that “America takes [the] leadership of democratic world front”<sup>48</sup> while DP leader Celal Bayar’s statements were as follows:

We welcome with great satisfaction and gratitude [the] Truman offer [to] aid Turkey. [The] Great American democracy, knowing well [the] dangers [of] totalitarian regimes for world peace and human freedom, did not abandon [the] UN Charter as only theory but proved [that] it will not hesitate [to] make sacrifices for its realization.<sup>49</sup>

To be sure, the U.S. government had other motives than those expressed in the Truman Doctrine. Leffler argues that the strategy to garner Republican support in Congress for Truman’s foreign policy by “scaring the hell out of them,” “sought to lock the Republicans into support for an American leadership role around the world.” Furthermore,

Truman’s political advisors...knew that fighting Communism resonated with the American people as did no other foreign policy slogan, because Communism was seen as an alien ideology poisonous to private enterprise and democratic pluralism and repugnant to ethnic Americans who saw their brethren in Eastern Europe oppressed by the Soviet behemoth. In the minds of Americans, Soviet Communism was no different than Nazi totalitarianism.<sup>50</sup>

In the final analysis, the Truman Doctrine can also be read as a domestic policy maneuver by Truman to enhance his standing and to secure bipartisan support in Congress for his foreign policy.

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<sup>45</sup> Nihat Erim, “Mr. Truman’ın Sözlerinden Çıkan Manalar” (The Meaning Inferred from Mr. Truman’s Words), *Ulus*, March 15, 1947.

<sup>46</sup> Necmettin Sadak, “Dünya Siyasetinde Bu Yüzyılın En Önemli Dönüm Noktası” (The Most Important Turning Point of World Politics at This Century), *Akşam*, March 14, 1947.

<sup>47</sup> Falih Rıfkı Atay, “Barış Kurucu Amerika” (America the Peacemaker), *Ulus*, 15 Mart 1947.

<sup>48</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, telegram no. 195, “Istanbul Press Reactions March 14 to Truman Speech,” Ankara, March 14, 1947, *IAT*, Roll 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.



Besides democratization, Turkey also had other problems. The financial burden of maintaining a large standing army in the face of Soviet demands precluded any prospect of domestic reform. Soviet presence in Turkey was a very frightful prospect. It was viewed as a direct threat to national independence. Haluk Ülman claimed that “all experiences demonstrated that whichever country Soviet forces entered, it fell under Soviet ascendancy shortly thereafter...Soviet forces entering Turkey under the pretext of protecting the Straits would soon want to bring all of Turkey under their control.”<sup>51</sup>

As far as the U.S. was concerned, Turkey was not a democracy, despite its desire to become one. President İnönü was doing his best to overcome this problem and bring Turkey closer with the U.S. while also fulfilling his promise to the Turkish people for greater democracy. Greece was “closer” to American policy-makers for being a democracy. On March 28, 1947, just a few days after the declaration of the Truman Doctrine, Ambassador Paul Porter told the House Committee on Foreign Affairs that he “developed admiration for the democratic spirit of the average Greek citizen” and that the Greeks were “eager to perfect their democratic institutions if given the opportunity.” For that reason, they needed “material assistance and technical guidance if they are to function as a free, self-sustaining democracy.”<sup>52</sup> The aid bill for Greece and Turkey was promoted by the State Department officials in constant reference to Greek democracy. Turkey was intermittently mentioned. In a strange episode, Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson cited Senator Daniel Webster’s speech in Congress during the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s.

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<sup>50</sup> Melvyn Leffler, *The Specter of Communism* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 69.

<sup>51</sup> Haluk Ülman, *Türk-Amerikan Diplomatik Münasebetleri, 1939-1947* (Turkish-American Diplomatic Relations, 1939-1947) (Ankara: Sevinç, 1961), 79.

<sup>52</sup> “Statement by Ambassador Paul A. Porter,” *Department of State Bulletin* 16, no. 409-A (May 4, 1947): 842.

Acheson avoided any remark, of course, that back then they were fighting the Turks.<sup>53</sup>

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Primary U.S. interest in Turkey from the end of World War II until the Truman Doctrine was geostrategy. A contrast with neighboring Greece seems quite to the point. Even though the Truman Doctrine put the two countries on the spot, different reasons determined this outcome. The period of this chapter witnessed this phenomenon. While Greece's democratic character was stressed by American policy-makers, Turkey's strategic importance weighed more. On the contrary, some Americans actually questioned the viability of democratization for Turkey. Turkish democratization had more to do with the policies of President İnönü than any inducement by the U.S. This is not to suggest that the U.S. was not interested in Turkey's democratization. However, the rhetoric of democracy did not take root in the American side the way it did with Greece until the Truman Doctrine.

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<sup>53</sup> "Statement by Acting Secretary Acheson," *Department of State Bulletin* 16, no. 409-A (May 4, 1947): 847-52.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE SECOND PERIOD: DEMOCRACY COMES TO THE FOREFRONT, 1947-1950**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Following the Truman Doctrine, Turkish democracy came to the forefront in American policy-making. Previously, the U.S. emphasized Greek democracy and Turkey's strategic position. The Truman Doctrine not only confirmed and consolidated the differences between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, thus declaring the Cold War, it also set the reason for Truman's declaration: "To support the free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."<sup>1</sup>

It cannot be argued that democracy totally replaced Turkey's geostrategic importance. However, reference to democracy increased remarkably when American officials discussed Turkey after the Truman Doctrine. This was not the case during the first period from the end of the war in 1945 until March 1947. At this stage, Turkish politics was undergoing a tremendous transformation from single-party rule to multi-party democracy while the "Grand Alliance" between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was crumbling.

With the advent of the second period, reference to democracy did not always come about in a positive way. When Americans discussed Turkey, many, especially members of Congress, considered Turkey undemocratic. Some even questioned

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<sup>1</sup> "Recommendations on Greece and Turkey---Message of the President to the Congress," *Department of State Bulletin* 16, no. 403 (March 23, 1947): 536.

whether it would not be more sensible to let Greece and Turkey fall under the Soviet sphere of influence since their regimes were more compatible with the Soviets'. Those supporting Turkey defended their position by stressing the fact that Turkey was democratizing. As it will be seen, these discussions did not influence Turkish policy-makers to a significant degree. They were already busy with democratization. Nevertheless, democracy continued to be an interesting connection, signifying the convergence of the two countries.

This chapter will examine how this convergence came about. It will be argued that even though the U.S. did not induce Turkey to democratize, citing Turkey's democracy remarkably increased. The elections of May 14, 1950 resulted with the DP coming to power. Coupled with Turkey's decision to participate in the Korean War a few months later, the allusion to Turkey's democratic character reached a peak.

#### **4.2 Turkish-American Relations and Turkish Democracy From the Truman Doctrine Until the Elections of May 14, 1950**

Following the Truman Doctrine, the administration asked the Congress for \$400 million for Greece and Turkey. Congress, on the other hand, did not want to throw money to what it perceived as corrupt and undemocratic regimes. Despite Truman's emphasis on Greece's democracy, both countries were seen as undemocratic. According to George Harris, "Turkey's democracy appeared too young to inspire confidence among Western observers; indeed, the Turkish regime was strongly criticized on these grounds during the congressional hearings on the Truman Doctrine."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> George Harris, *Troubled Alliance; Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945-1971* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972), 29.

Haluk Ülman delineates three criticisms raised against Turkey during the hearings on the bill for the aid. First, just like Greece, Turkey was seen as an authoritarian regime, disrespectful of human rights and freedoms. Should the U.S. aid these countries, it would only strengthen them. Some members of Congress feared that even though Turkey was moving along the path of democracy, the government might use the funds to suppress the opposition.<sup>3</sup> Second, Turkey remained neutral during the last war and even showed sympathy and gave help to the Nazis. To help such a state would betray the cause of the United Nations.<sup>4</sup> Third, some members of Congress argued against helping Turkey due to the Armenian question.<sup>5</sup> Of these three, the first point received the greatest attention by American public opinion.

Representative George H. Bender of Ohio was one of the most vocal critics of Turkey. In a speech he delivered before the House floor, he declared:

It will be an unparalleled act of hypocrisy for this House to vote an act which guarantees the freedom of the press to the American newspapers when that freedom we know for an absolute fact does not exist in Turkey today. That arrogant Turkish military dictatorship is asking us for money with the full knowledge that they intend to violate every provision required by the Congress.<sup>6</sup>

In order to thwart these objections, the administration defended the aid on the grounds that as it would alleviate Turkey's domestic and foreign burdens, it would also help for the establishment of full-fledged democracy, one of the objectives of

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<sup>3</sup> "Statement Adopted by the Planning Committee of American Veterans Committee, Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations," 45-95, "Senator Edwin C. Johnson's Speech," *Congressional Records*, Vol. 93, Part 3, 3293-3294; in Haluk Ülman, *Türk-Amerikan Diplomatik Münasebetleri, 1939-1947* (Turkish-American Diplomatic Relations, 1939-1947) (Ankara: Sevinç, 1961), 103.

<sup>4</sup> "Speech by John M. Robinson, Representative from Kentucky," *Congressional Records*, Vol. 93, Part 4, 4700-4702; in *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> "Speech by Alvin E. Okonski," *Congressional Records*, Vol. 93, Part 4, 4798; in *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Congressional Record*, 80<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Part II, Appendix, pp. 1883-1984; quoted in Kemal Karpat, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959): 189.

the aid bill.<sup>7</sup> The State Department's "Interim Greece-Turkey Assistance Committee" suggested stressing these two themes to Congress and the public: That "a cardinal objective of United States foreign policy is a world in which nations shall be able to work out their own way of life free of coercion by other nations" and that "through the granting of assistance we intend to help the Greek and Turkish nations to develop their free institutions."<sup>8</sup> Randall Bennett Woods looked at Senator J. William Fulbright's position during the debate, which was quite representative of other members of Congress:

The president's proposals came under attack from liberal senators...Turkey was not a democracy and had remained neutral during most of World War II. Why not, these critics asked, let Greece and Turkey pass into the communist world? The two nations would simply be changing one form of undemocratic government for another. The Truman administration could only answer that, with economic help, Greece might gradually embrace democracy, and Turkey was already moving away from the autocratic era of Mustafa Kemal. Under noncommunist regimes, the future was at least hopeful, whereas under communist rule it was sure to be dark indeed. Fulbright agreed...Russia had "brought to a higher state of perfection than anyone else the technique of infiltration and corruption from within." Only Nazi Germany was comparable in modern history.<sup>9</sup>

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's report of April 3 is quite informative of American concerns. According to the report, the State Department believed "that the prompt extension of aid proposed to Greece and Turkey would have the effect of encouraging constructive, democratic forces in other areas and thereby of reducing the possibility of similar situations arising elsewhere."<sup>10</sup> Trying to alleviate Americans' traditional dislike of monarchies, which might have

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<sup>7</sup> Ülman, 104.

<sup>8</sup> Departmental Interim Greece-Turkey Assistance Committee, "Draft of Domestic Information Program on Assistance to Greece and Turkey," Washington, May 6, 1947, *IAT*, roll 2.

<sup>9</sup> Randall Bennett Woods, *Fulbright: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 137-8.

complicated matters for Greece, the report argued that “if the Greek people wish to have a king, just as the British wish to have one, and the Swedes, the Norwegians, and the Dutch, that is a matter for them to decide.”<sup>11</sup> Addressing the level of democracy in Greece and Turkey, the report stated that

It is the view of the Department of State that both the Greek and Turkish Governments are essentially democratic and that both are progressing along the road of democracy. The essential democracy of these two Governments is, it is believed, demonstrated by the fact that in both countries substantial opposition parties are not only legal but are carrying on an energetic campaign of criticism of the Government in power without hindrance by the governmental authorities. Both countries enjoy freedom of the press to a degree which exists in few other countries.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, thwarting allegations that Turkey held close relations with Germany during the war, the report declared that “Turkish neutrality was useful to the United Nations, and it is doubtful whether any greater benefits would have been derived from active Turkish belligerence.”<sup>13</sup> This report was obviously a search for support for the aid bill. For one thing, Turkish democracy at this stage was far from perfect. İnönü was still trying to accommodate multi-party democracy with politicians accustomed to the ways and means of the single-party period.

For their part, Turkish policy-makers were concerned that the American aid would have strings attached to it, making it unacceptable by Turkish public opinion. In his encounter with Feridun Cemal Erkin, Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry, the embassy’s counselor Herbert Bursley reported that “Erkin said [the] aid law in [its] present form would cause difficulties here, as press reports thereof already had, stating [that] this would be [the] case even were application of [the] law

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<sup>10</sup> “Questions and Answers Relating to the Greco-Turkish Aid Bill,” *Department of State Bulletin* 16, no. 409-A (May 4, 1947): 870.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 874.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 875.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 876.

moderate.” Bursley felt that “we must try to find a way to maintain reasonable control of [the] use [of] our money without giving internal or external foes of [the] Turkish Govt. a chance to cry ‘capitulations, Ottoman debt, no confidence in Turkey, etc.’”<sup>14</sup>

At any rate, American policy-makers still had military calculations in mind when they considered the aid to Turkey. In a report dated July 15, 1947, Ambassador Wilson indicated that

money spent on Turkish armed forces can be considered in the nature of a national life-insurance premium for the United States. It is believed that an equal sum spent for armaments for American armed forces would not produce the corresponding effect of reducing Russia’s aggressive attitude toward the rest of the world...Because of her strategic position Turkey becomes actually the first line of defense for the United States in any aggressive move by Russia.<sup>15</sup>

While formulating the aid program for Turkey, Secretary of State George C. Marshall ordered one of his subordinates, Paul F. McGuire, to go to Turkey to conduct “an over-all study of the Turkish Armed Forces...to include the Turkish economic and industrial potential for national defense and to determine recommendations for assistance to Turkey.”<sup>16</sup>

In garnering public support for Greece and Turkey, the government officials often combined strategic concerns with democracy and anti-Communism. In a speech he delivered to a public audience in North Carolina on May 5, Henry Villard, the State Department’s Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, rebuffed allegations “that we are merely supporting so-called reactionary regimes without bringing pressure to bear to introduce our own concept of

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<sup>14</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, telegram no. 229, Ankara, March 24, 1947, *IAT*, roll 2.

<sup>15</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1750-A, “Supplementary report of the U.S. Ambassador Recommending Continuing Aid to Turkey,” Ankara, July 15, 1947, *IAT*, roll 3.

<sup>16</sup> Secretary of State George C. Marshall to Paul F. McGuire, Washington, May 23, 1947, *IAT*, roll 2.



democracy.”<sup>17</sup> Villard warned that “it is interesting to note that these arguments are precisely what has been heard on the Moscow radio and publicized in the Russian press.”<sup>18</sup> Villard continued that Greece occupied a vital strategic position in the eastern Mediterranean and the failure of democratic institutions there would jeopardize Turkey and all of the Near East. Defending Turkish neutrality during the war, Villard averred that “at best, a belligerent Turkey could have served the Allied cause only by keeping Axis troops from occupying her territory – a result achieved anyway by her continued neutrality.”<sup>19</sup> As the evidence suggest, even though interest for Turkish democracy came to the forefront at this stage, this was coupled with Turkey’s strategic significance.<sup>20</sup>

On May 22, Congress approved the Greek-Turkish aid bill by a vote of 287 to 107 in the House and 67 to 23 in the Senate. The bill signified the increasing association between the U.S. and Turkey. President İnönü told the Associated Press correspondent “that American aid was a step toward the defense of democracy, and that closer relations between Turkey and the United States of America would contribute to the firm establishment of democracy in Turkey.”<sup>21</sup>

Back in Turkey, the DP’s base of support was expanding. Kemal Karpat analyzed this phenomenon as follows:

The Democratic Party attracted the main opposition groups in the country regardless of the differences of opinion and interest, and regardless of the fact that its program, views, and mentality were not known in any detail. Peasants, workers, intellectuals, and landlords rallied around to give it the character of a movement. The party moved directly into the political fight for power from the very

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<sup>17</sup> “Some Aspects of Our Policy in Greece and Turkey,” *Department of State Bulletin* 16, no. 411 (May 18, 1947): 997.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 1000.

<sup>20</sup> Department of State Interim Greece-Turkey Assistance Committee, “Survey Mission to Investigate Turkish Needs for Assistance,” Washington, May 5, 1947, *IAT*, roll 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ulus*, May 12, 13, 1947; *New York Times*, April 12, 1947; in Karpat, 189-90.

beginning, not as a direct decision of its leaders, but forced by its supporters. The leaders became heroes overnight, and few people, if any, ever bothered with their opinions or their past affiliations and support of the Republican Party, which they now criticized...From the beginning, it based its power on the masses instead of the few chosen ones. It brought a hope for improvement, awakened a general desire for freedom.<sup>22</sup>

Prime Minister Recep Peker, as can be expected, was not excited of the DP's expansion. Tension between the RPP and the DP mounted from December 1946 until July 1947. Meanwhile, relations between the veteran members of the RPP and the party's liberal minority were uneasy. As the DP's criticisms against the Peker government hardened, Peker exclaimed that the DP was seeking a revolution. For their part, leaders of the DP complained of the government's oppressive behavior. İnönü, even though displeased with Peker's lack of refinement, was also disappointed with the DP's tone of voice. Commenting on his meeting with the President in early-June, Fuat Köprülü reportedly told Ambassador Wilson that İnönü "expressed his uneasiness at the vigor of opposition in the country which he felt might lead to disturbances and even revolution."<sup>23</sup> Köprülü and Bayar objected to the accusations and defended themselves by saying that "they knew that such a move could only bring about the establishment of a heavy-handed dictatorship in the country under which the democratic gains of the past year and a half would be lost."<sup>24</sup>

On June 14, Köprülü elaborated on his criticisms of the Peker government. First, the government's pressure on the DP caused problems for the smooth functioning of democracy. Second, it was problematic for the President to be the chairman of a political party at the same time. Third, Köprülü argued that the single-

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<sup>22</sup> Karpat, 166-7.

<sup>23</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1692, "President İnönü Discusses Political Situation with Democrat Party Leaders," Ankara, June 13, 1947, *IAT*, roll 2.

party mentality was still firmly embedded in the minds of RPP members and state officials.<sup>25</sup> Although Herbert Bursley considered some of Köprülü's points to be justified, he was "unfair in not giving President İnönü credit for having been a chief instigator of the swing toward democracy which Turkey has witnessed in the past year." For Bursley, adjustment to the dynamics of the new era would take time: "In a state where one-party rule prevailed for so many years, a gradual development rather than an abrupt change is needed with a consequent metamorphosis of attitude for both party and administrative officials who attained their present positions through the operation of that one-party system."<sup>26</sup>

Peker, in an interview with the *New York Times* correspondent on April 17, dubbed the DP's charges "political ballyhoo."<sup>27</sup> He tried to convince the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* correspondent John Leacacos by saying "you also are now living in this country...I am sure you can see for yourself that the press IS free" (emphasis from the original script). Peker rebuffed the claims that the recent elections for village elders were rigged

by asserting that observers of both Parties were obligated by law to witness both the balloting and the counting, but that in some cases it conceivably may have been impossible for Democrat observers to comply properly with the requirements of the law as to their official status of observers.<sup>28</sup>

At any rate, Peker's justifications were far from satisfactory. President İnönü, in order to resolve the differences between Peker and the DP, held a series of talks between the two sides throughout June and July. His declaration of July 12, 1947, the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> *Kuvvet*, June 14, 1947.

<sup>26</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1697, "Deputy Köprülü Expands on Causes of Turkish Internal Political Disunity," Ankara, June 17, 1947, *IAT*, roll 2.

<sup>27</sup> "Meeting Between Prime Minister Peker and New York Times Correspondent Daniell," Ankara, April 17, 1947, *CA*, 30.01/12.70.5.

<sup>28</sup> "Meeting Between Prime Minister Peker and Cleveland Plain Dealer John F. Leacacos," Ankara, April 17, 1947, *CA*, 30.01/12.70.6.

result of these talks, marked another turning point in the history of Turkish democracy:

I have taken the Prime Minister's statement that the administration is in no way suppressing the opposition as a guarantee and passed this on to Mr. Bayar. I have also taken the opposition leader's denial of illegal means and methods and his assurance to stay within the confines of the law as a satisfactory guarantee and passed it on to the Prime Minister.

İnönü admonished the government of its "responsibilities with respect to peace and order" and of "impartial and equal treatment of legitimate and lawful political parties" as "the basic requirement for a safe political life."<sup>29</sup>

İnönü's declaration received praise from all sides. Fuat Köprülü called him "a personality of historical stature who raised himself above parties and in this capacity he belongs to both parties as a national personality."<sup>30</sup> A few weeks later, Bayar would tell *Tasvir* that "I take pleasure in stating that the honorable President of the Republic is attached to [the cause of democracy] with great determination and enthusiasm. I am convinced that the Declaration of July 12 is an important document in the history of democracy."<sup>31</sup> Ambassador Wilson commented that "by this outstandingly fair and conciliatory communiqué, the President has well illustrated the efforts he is making to promote the development of Western democracy in Turkey" and that the declaration will "turn out to be an important milestone in the development of democracy in Turkey." Wilson called Washington's attention to the DP's status as a respected opposition party: "It is also noteworthy that in a year's time the opposition should have established itself so well as to merit being thus

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<sup>29</sup> "Cumhurbaşkanı İsmet İnönü'nün Tebliğleri" (President İnönü's Statement), *Ayn Tarihi* (July 1947): 15.

<sup>30</sup> *Kuvvet*, July 12 & 17, 1947; quoted in Karpas, 192.

<sup>31</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1824, "Interview Granted by Celal Bayar," Ankara, September 3, 1947, *IAT*, roll 4.

dignified.”<sup>32</sup> Some years later, Karpaz would call the declaration “one of İnönü’s chief achievements.”<sup>33</sup>

The timing of İnönü’s declaration was quite interesting. On the same day, Ambassador Wilson and Foreign Minister Hasan Saka signed the agreement administering the U.S. aid to Turkey. According to Hakan Yılmaz, the declaration “was a message to the Americans as much as to the Turks.”<sup>34</sup> Though Yılmaz’s assertion is debatable, both sides referred to their satisfaction with the agreement. Wilson said that the principle to safeguard and respect the two countries’ sovereignty and independence guided him.<sup>35</sup> Nihat Erim wrote in his column that “Turkey is cognizant of the fact that it serves the cause of the West and that its interests coincide with the peace and justice-loving members of the United Nations.”<sup>36</sup> The embassy reported that other newspapers were just as jubilant as Erim. *Memleket* reported on July 14 that “the main thought underlying the Agreement is collaboration between the great American democracy and Turkey on a basis of equality and for the purpose of protecting peace and security and establishing a free and happy world.” *Tanin* commented that “America knows that an honest, diligent, democratic and peace-loving nation exists in this crucial point of the Near East which respects the right of others and entertains no offensive designs in regard to its neighbors.” In a similar tone, pro-DP *Son Telgraf* connected Turkish-American relations and Turkish democracy: “The Agreement signed between Turkey and America...will serve to protect the security of the country and insure its economic strengthening, so the

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<sup>32</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1758, “Further Developments in Peker-Bayar Controversy-Statements by Prime Minister and President of Republic,” Ankara, July 15, 1947, *IAT*, roll 2.

<sup>33</sup> Karpaz, 195.

<sup>34</sup> Yılmaz, 22.

<sup>35</sup> “Türkiye-Birleşik Amerika Arasındaki Yardım Anlaşmasının İmza Töreni” (Ceremony of the Signing of the Aid Agreement Between Turkey and the United States), *Aynı Tarihi* (July 1947): 16.

<sup>36</sup> Nihat Erim, “Türk-Amerika Dostluğu” (Turkish-American Friendship), *Ulus*, July 12, 1947.

democratic movement accelerated under İnönü's guidance will benefit the nation's recovery."<sup>37</sup>

Many read İnönü's declaration as his discontent with Peker since it laid more emphasis on the government's responsibilities. Nihat Erim, a close confidant of İnönü and the leader of the liberals within the RPP, told an embassy official that "İnönü has for a long time been sincerely interested in promoting the development of western democracy in Turkey. In 1939, he wanted to establish a multi-party system...but the war came along and made it impossible to undertake such a drastic change in a time of emergency." Erim's personal views regarding democracy owed to the education he received abroad. He told an embassy official that "after his return from a liberal education abroad, it had been impossible for him to accept the old-fashioned, Oriental, authoritarian mentality which he found in this country."<sup>38</sup>

Under the aegis of İnönü, the RPP's liberals attacked Peker. The embassy reported the attacks during the vote of confidence for the Peker government in the RPP assembly group on August 26:

After a number of deputies had spoken in favor of the Government and had praised the Prime Minister...a bitter attack on the Government apparently began, led by a number of younger deputies who heretofore have not been prominent on the political scene. The sparkplug of the attack seems to have been Deputy Tahsin Banguoğlu of Bingöl, who was assisted by another young deputy, Cavit Oral, representing Seyhan. Judging from the accounts in the press and from statements made to an officer of this Embassy by eye witnesses, the dissident deputies bitterly attacked the Peker Government on the grounds that it was not living up to the conditions established by the President on July 12, that Prime Minister Peker was in disagreement with the President and was working against him, and that the Peker Government was still governed by an 'authoritarian' mentality and was incapable of

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<sup>37</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1760, "Reaction to Turkish Aid Agreement," Ankara, July 16, 1947, *IAT*, roll 4.

<sup>38</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1776, "Conversation with Deputy Nihat Erim on Turkish Political Situation," Ankara, July 28, 1947, *IAT*, roll 4.

understanding and accepting the basic principles of modern democracy.<sup>39</sup>

When the vote was called, 34 deputies out of 337 cast their votes “nay.” The group came to be known as *Otuzbeşler*, the 35ers, together with Memduh Şevket Esenal, who was not present. The embassy reported Erim’s conversation with an embassy official on the episode:

Erim allowed it to be very clearly understood that President İnönü is encouraging the new group, in line with his plans to further the development of Western democracy and facilitate the free expression of opinion. Although according to Erim the President is in basic disagreement with the Prime Minister, he is not intriguing against him...Erim inferred that if public opinion should turn against Peker and cause his downfall, the President would not be disappointed.<sup>40</sup>

The embassy’s counselor Herbert Bursley commented on the event as follows:

The fact that there is now a faction within the People’s Party which is publicly advocating that the party should completely eradicate the influence of the one-party days and hasten the development of Western democracy in Turkey is very encouraging. The role which President İnönü has played in urging Nihat Erim and his friends to speak their minds is further indication of the President’s sincere desire to see Western democratic political methods established in this country. He has once more added to the great prestige he enjoys and strengthened his own political position.<sup>41</sup>

Peker, for his part, refused to admit publicly that there was a chasm between himself and the President. However, a chasm did exist. For one thing, the legality of İnönü’s statement of July 12 was controversial. Under the constitution, once the Prime Minister’s cabinet received a vote of confidence from the assembly, he would only answer to the assembly, not the President. As such, Peker complained that the President had no right to step in on behalf of one party or the other, even if that President was İnönü. Accordingly, Peker tried to gain the control of the RPP by

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<sup>39</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1819, “Peker Government Wins Vote of Confidence in Secret Caucus of People’s Party Assembly Group; Dissident Group within People’s Party,” Ankara, August 30, 1947, *IAT*, roll 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

asking İnönü to assume a neutral position vis-a-vis the two parties. This was Peker's maneuver to effectively isolate İnönü. Peker requested İnönü to allow him to integrate the offices of the Prime Minister and Vice-Chairman of the RPP. İnönü did not yield to Peker's requests. Peker resigned on September 9.<sup>42</sup>

To do Peker justice, he and other conservative members of the RPP saw a danger in the rise of the DP. In Karpat's words, "behind the claims of democracy, they saw the beginning of compromises on the very principles and bases of the Republic, on secularism, the very foundation which shaped the whole philosophy and the mind of the Republic, on statism, and eventually on freedom itself."<sup>43</sup> Peker's authoritarianism aimed to protect what he perceived as, and helped to create, the principal foundations of the Republic.

Turkish democracy also received close attention by Western press. In a cable interview with Virgil Pinkley of the United Press, President İnönü termed Turkey's efforts to develop democratic institutions "serious and sincere" and said that "democratic evolution will continue without interruption until it has attained its ideal form."<sup>44</sup> According to Ambassador Wilson, this was quite important as "the President...once more publicly committed himself to a policy of furthering democratic development."<sup>45</sup> Philips Price, a deputy from the British Labor Party, wrote at the *Manchester Guardian* on September 30 that "the issue of civic liberties and the rights of the citizen have become alive in Turkey today." Price further stated that "it looked at one time as if Turkey, after her revolution, was going the way of

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Teoman Gül, *Türk Siyasal Hayatında Recep Peker* (Recep Peker in Turkish Political Life) (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1998): 89-93.

<sup>43</sup> Karpat, 202-3.

<sup>44</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1633, "President İnönü Grants Interview to United Press," Ankara, May 14, 1947, *IAT*, roll 9.

<sup>45</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1641, "Comments on President İnönü's Interview with United Press," Ankara, May 20, 1947, roll 9.



Russia and that the dictatorship of the new order would galvanise into permanency. But the history of the last two years shows that this has not been so.”<sup>46</sup> Earlier in May, an article in the British newspaper *Times* had likened the RPP and the DP to the Republican and Democratic parties in the U.S. because they had no essential difference in their programs and both had “right-wing Conservatives, centre Moderates, and left-wing Radicals” within their ranks.<sup>47</sup>

Back in the U.S., even though Turkish democracy was coming to the forefront, Greece enjoyed the privilege of spawning the idea of democracy in ancient history. Senator Arthur Vandenberg gave a short but powerful message on occasion of the commencement of Greek-language broadcasts by the Voice of America in May 1947: “We in the United States have always had great admiration for your country and your people. Who can forget that Greece was the cradle of democracy in the ancient world?”<sup>48</sup> Two years later, Secretary of State Dean Acheson would credit Greece not only for democracy but also for international institutionalism: “Greece, which gave democracy to the world, was also the site of one of history’s earliest attempts to give legal expression to international solidarity on behalf of peace. This was the Amphyctyonic League, founded by the independent city states of ancient Greece five hundred years before Christ.”<sup>49</sup>

In a State Department memorandum, dated December 15, 1947, the Turkish constitution was honored as it embodied “most of the progressive principles common

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<sup>46</sup> Philips Price, “Democratic Trends in Turkey,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 30, 1947; in Robert Coe to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 2226, “Manchester Guardian Article Entitled ‘Democratic Trends in Turkey,’” London, October 2, 1947, *IAT*, roll 4.

<sup>47</sup> “Political System Freed From Army Influence: Challenge to the Democrats,” *Times*, May 13, 1947; in Robert Coe to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1112, “Times Article, ‘Rival Turkish Parties,’” London, May 16, 1947, *IAT*, roll 2.

<sup>48</sup> “Recorded Statement by Senator Vandenberg,” *Department of State Bulletin* 16, no. 412 (May 25, 1947): 1037.

<sup>49</sup> “Work and Victory Demonstration in Greece,” *Department of State Bulletin* 20, no. 509 (April 3, 1949): 433.

to the American, French, and British counterparts.” Despite Atatürk’s reforms, “the one-party system of government was retained, as it was believed by the Kemalists that the democratization of the country must be a slow and gradual process.” The memorandum further stated that “the slow but steady progress being made towards western democratic forms and practices is in marked contrast to contemporary developments in neighboring Balkan countries.”<sup>50</sup>

British and American defense establishments had more confidence in Turkey’s political system. In the Pentagon Talks of 1947 between the two governments, Greek leaders’ inability “to establish a stable and efficient government...has greatly retarded the economic, social, and political rehabilitation of the country. In consequence, it has opened the way to the Communists.” In Turkey, on the other hand, “political conditions...are stable and marked by a definite trend toward more complete democracy. It appears unlikely that any special action by the U.S. and Britain will be called for this sphere.”<sup>51</sup> It can be inferred that the militaries’ interest in stability explains why they held different views than their governments.

At any rate, Greek democracy was far from perfect, just like its Turkish counterpart. The Truman administration was also aware of this fact. On December 7, 1947, the Greek Parliament passed a law that banned strikes and lockouts. The presidents of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) sent letters to Secretary of State George Marshall. In his reply to William Green of the AFL, Secretary Marshall defended the Greek government’s decision on the following grounds:

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<sup>50</sup> Dr. Cleland to Mr. LeBreton, office memorandum, “A Brief Description of Democratic Reform Measures Adopted by the Turkish Government,” Washington, December 15, 1947, *IAT*, roll 4.

<sup>51</sup> “The Pentagon Talks of 1947,” *FRUS*, 1947, Vol. V, 532.

According to our information this law was enacted hurriedly at a time when the very security of Greece was in grave danger as a result of Communist-inspired terror and violence, and when members of the Greek Parliament feared that the outbreak of a number of strikes might bring an end to the independence of the country.<sup>52</sup>

Reference to freedom was placed in the context of the animosity that Americans felt towards the Soviet Union and Communism. In a letter he sent to Senator Vandenberg requesting the continuation of the aid to Greece and Turkey, Secretary Marshall insisted that “the totalitarian groups whose aggressive aims have thus far been frustrated by the continued existence of a free Greece and a free Turkey are convinced that time will play into their hands.” Without explicitly mentioning the Soviet Union, Marshall continued that “their leader state, with assurance that the United States will soon tire of giving aid to far-off Mediterranean countries...will be able to take over by default.”<sup>53</sup>

With the incumbency of the moderate Hasan Saka government in Turkey on September 10, 1947, the political atmosphere eased considerably. Peker went on the defensive and claimed that he was misunderstood and that “if in the future an attempt should be made to return to the single-party system in Turkey, he would be in the foreground of those working for the re-establishment of an opposition party.” Erim was quite surprised to hear this. So was Bursley in his report on the controversy: “Nihat Erim went on to say that he was very surprised to learn of the change in Peker’s views concerning an opposition. He declared that public opinion was well

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<sup>52</sup> “Department of State Answers Protests of CIO and AFL Concerning Antistrike, Anti-Lockout Law Passed by Greek Parliament,” *Department of State Bulletin* 18, no. 453 (March 7, 1948): 315.

<sup>53</sup> “Request for Continuing Aid to Greece and Turkey: Letter from the Secretary of State to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate,” *Department of State Bulletin* 18, no. 453 (March 7, 1948): 299.

aware of what the former Prime Minister had thought of the Democrat Party at the time of its formation.”<sup>54</sup>

One of the Saka government’s important decisions in late-1947 was the abolition of martial law in İstanbul and the surrounding provinces. Ambassador Wilson argued that the martial law had “ceased to be justifiable from a military point of view” and commented that the decision to lift martial law was an indication of the government’s desire to normalize conditions in Turkey.<sup>55</sup>

Following the commitment of the RPP’s assembly group to liberalize the electoral law in January 1948, the embassy informed Washington that “this decision is one of the most important domestic political events which have occurred since the establishment of the multi-party system in Turkey” and at the same time it is “a decisive step forward on the road leading to the establishment of western democracy in Turkey.”<sup>56</sup> When the electoral law was revised in July, Ambassador Wilson termed it “an important step in laying the groundwork for establishing the tradition of free and fair elections in this country” and the continuation of “the progress toward western democratic institutions.”<sup>57</sup>

The embassy’s sympathy for İnönü did not cease during 1948. Following the virulent attacks on the President by the extreme right-wing Nation’s Party, first secretary Warwick Perkins argued that the attacks were unjustified “for in the past two or three years President İnönü has shown definite tendencies towards leading the

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<sup>54</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1983, “Further Developments in Recep Peker-Nihat Erim Controversy,” Ankara, December 23, 1947, *IAT*, roll 4.

<sup>55</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, “Current Events Airgram no.54,” Ankara, December 11, 1947, *IAT*, roll 4.

<sup>56</sup> Bursley to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 26, “People’s Party Assembly Group Approves in Principle Government’s Proposal That Electoral Law Be Amended,” Ankara, January 17, 1948, *IAT*, roll 4.

<sup>57</sup> Wilson to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 261, “Grand National Assembly Revises Electoral Law,” Ankara, July 13, 1948, *IAT*, roll 5.

country away from the so-called ‘Chief System’ (i.e., the pyramiding of power into the hands of one man).”<sup>58</sup>

American diplomats also witnessed less known yet bizarre affairs in the country’s political affairs. Perkins reported on September 30 a recent conversation he had with Celal Bayar in İstanbul. For Perkins, Bayar seemed under immense stress as they played bridge. For Bayar to call İnönü “cynical” surprised Perkins:

What, however, surprised me more than anything else was that [Bayar] spoke as if he were one of the militant founders of the rival Nation’s Party. Indeed, he bluntly referred to the presidential declaration of July 12<sup>th</sup> last year as a deceptive tactic, in unadorned language described İnönü as a person more concerned over his own position than over the welfare of the nation and the success of the cause of democracy in this country, and in quite unequivocal words hinted that the present insincere course pursued by the element in power would in the end compel the people to take initiative into their own hands.<sup>59</sup>

Perkins commented that it was strange to hear Celal Bayar talk in such a way, whom he considered “the staunch advocate of reserve and moderation” and dismissed the episode by saying that “it is doubtful whether he actually means what he says.”<sup>60</sup>

It was not only American diplomats who were observant of the political developments in their host country. In Washington, Turkish Press Attaché Nüzhet Baba, in a press summary dated May 11, 1948, commented extensively on the upcoming presidential elections. For Baba, American party politics was “corrupt.” However, President Truman was an honest man, someone who can be taken for his

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<sup>58</sup> Perkins to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 322, “Nation’s Party Leaders Demand Elimination of President İnönü,” Ankara, August 24, 1948, *IAT*, roll 5.

<sup>59</sup> Perkins to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 382, “Statement Made by Celal Bayar, Leader of the Democratic Party,” Ankara, September 30, 1948, *IAT*, roll 6.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

word. “Nevertheless,” said Baba, “his star in the upcoming elections is not bright.” He expected General Dwight Eisenhower to sway the elections if he decided to run.<sup>61</sup>

On another report in November 1948, Baba analyzed the problems that Turkey faced in its relations with American public opinion. Especially since the Greek war of independence, anti-Turkish propaganda created a hostile environment. Even though there was some change recently, Baba thought that this was not enough: “Even though many works published after 1925 are for us, besides the fact that the direction of the Turkish revolution has not taken root in the minds of the people, the struggle for democracy during İnönü’s era has had few reflections.” Another stigma was the much-debated Capital Levy (Varlık Vergisi). This was the exorbitant tax imposed by the Turkish government during World War II to boost revenues. As the tax was designed to punish the rich segments of society, Greek, Armenian, and Jewish minorities suffered most. In this light, “Turks have always mistreated minorities is a deep-rooted opinion here. In the mean time, that a proper explanation on the Capital Levy was never made here needs to be stressed on.”<sup>62</sup>

Notwithstanding Baba’s pessimism, 1948 was a bright year for Turkish democracy and Turkish-American relations. While the embassy sent laudatory reports back to Washington, Turkish neutrality in the last war was justified in a detailed article by Harry Howard in the *Department of State Bulletin*. The article put much blame on the Soviet Union for not reconciling its differences with Turkey in the wake of Nazi expansionism. Indeed, it went far to suggest that Stalin toyed with the idea of joining the “Pact of Steel” until he was attacked by Germany in June

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<sup>61</sup> İzzettin T. Nişbay (Acting General Manager, Bureau of Press & Broadcast) to Adil Derinsu (Private Secretary of the Prime Minister), “Press summary received from the Press Attaché in Washington,” Ankara, May 22, 1948, CA, 30.01/101.627.14.

<sup>62</sup> Baba to Bureau of Press & Broadcast, “A report on the subject of publicizing our country,” Washington, November 24, 1948, CA, 30.01/101.628.9.

1941. The article defended Turkey's position after the Tehran Conference of December 1943, which urged Turkey to declare war on Germany. Inadvertently, "[Turkey's] position as a neutral served the interests of the Allies. Had it acted prematurely...the entire Near East might well have been thrown open to the Axis armed forces in the critical period of 1940-1942."<sup>63</sup> Even though the Soviet Union could be blamed for its cordial relations with Germany, Italy, and Japan before June 1941, Turkey was not immaculate in its wartime record. The article can be perceived as a way to justify the U.S.'s support of an evasive neutral that was turning into a valuable ally.

President Truman's statement on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Republic of Turkey in 1948 is also noteworthy. First, Truman expressed his admiration "for the resolute struggle of the Turkish nation to go forward under the indomitable leadership of...Kemal Atatürk." Next, touching on the convergence of the two countries and the importance of democracy, Truman said that "we are still happier that the decision of the Turkish nation to continue the development of democratic institutions and to further safeguard human rights and liberties is being carried out at a time when these ideals-so dear to all Americans-are being ruthlessly crushed and obliterated in many parts of the world."<sup>64</sup> It was the first time that Truman personally took the opportunity to convey the message of democracy to Turkey. Others would follow.

Turkey's identity as a Moslem country normally did not receive significant attention by the U.S. However, American policy-makers sometimes surmised that improving relations with Turkey can also positively affect their standing with other

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<sup>63</sup> Harry N. Howard, "Germany, the Soviet Union, and Turkey during World War II," *Department of State Bulletin* 19, no. 472 (July 18, 1948): 63-77.

Moslem countries. In a memorandum sent to the State Department's Office of Far Eastern Affairs, Charles Reed of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs maintained that the U.S. "might find it advantageous to back Turkey, an important figure in the Islamic world, for one of the non-permanent seats on the Security Council."<sup>65</sup>

By 1949, Turkey was also being commended by old friends. Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, Britain's ambassador to Ankara during the war, wrote for the *News of the World* on October 9, 1949. Hugessen avowed that even though Turkey needed a period of tutorship at the initial stages of its political development, "in the last four years, the movement towards full political freedom has received a great and not altogether expected impetus." Hugessen likened Turkey to an adolescent who just recently "proclaimed himself of age." In addition, Hugessen warned Turkey that "though Russia has not asserted her claims since 1947, she might always renew them."<sup>66</sup>

Other observers also liked what they saw. Following his visit to Greece and Turkey, Professor Quincy Wright of the University of Chicago wrote to Dean Acheson that he "was impressed by the high morale among both the Turks and the Greeks" and that U.S. "policy has been a very real success in building democracy, restoring morale and increasing the capacity of these countries to defend and support themselves."<sup>67</sup>

Another important event in the history of Turkish democracy was the abolition of the Independence Tribunals (İstiklal Mahkemeleri) in 1949. These

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<sup>64</sup> "Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Republic of Turkey," *Department of State Bulletin* 19, no. 488 (November 7, 1948): 585.

<sup>65</sup> "Memorandum by Charles S. Reed of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs to the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Buttersworth)," *FRUS*, 1948, V. I, pt. 2, 609.

<sup>66</sup> Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, "Turkey Stays Friendly With the West – And Keeps an Eye on Russia," *News of the World*, October 9, 1949; in Sappington, III to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 1651, "Article on Turkey by Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen," London, October 18, 1949, *IAT*, roll 8.

<sup>67</sup> Wright to Acheson, Chicago, April 5, 1949, *IAT*, roll 7.



tribunals were the legacy of the War of Liberation. As the extraordinary measure of extraordinary times, they tried deserters and traitors. What made them remarkable was that the cases were tried by members of the TGNA. Moreover, their verdicts were not subject to appeal and sentences, including executions, were swiftly enforced. These tribunals remained inactive after the War of Liberation, except briefly during the insurgency in southeast Turkey in 1925. Irksome of the opposition's hardening tone, Recep Peker threatened DP members in early-1949 that the tribunals were still in existence. Inadvertently, Peker's threat brought about the tribunals' dissolution. The embassy's Turkish adviser, Ali Nur Bozcalı, was quoted by Perkins that the tribunals "have rendered considerable services during the period of the War of Independence, in suppressing treason, public disorder and desertion, and under the Republic, in the matter of checking reactionary movements."<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, they were incompatible with democratic norms and were therefore abolished.

Foreign Minister Necmettin Sadak's speech of December 12, 1949, on the occasion of Turkey's adherence to the Statute of the Council of Europe, is also noteworthy. It is another signal of the connection between Turkish democratization and its post-war convergence with the West. Sadak addressed the assembly and reportedly "stressed the importance of the step about to be taken as a recognition of the fact that Turkey's foreign and economic policies tie it to the Western world rather than to the Middle East." "Anatolia," exclaimed Sadak, has now "entered into the political and economic frontiers of the European Union."

Similar to President Truman's Voice of America speech the previous year, Assistant Secretary of State George Allen addressed the Turkish-American Society

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<sup>68</sup> Perkins to the Secretary of State, dispatch no. 158, "Abolition of the Turkish Tribunals of

in New York on October 28, 1949, a day before Turkey's Republic Day. Allen also chose to praise the gains of the Turkish Revolution by contrasting it with its counterpart to the north: "It has always been a source of amazement to me that two nearly simultaneous revolutions in two neighboring territories, the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, should have had such opposite results. In Russia, revolution brought the extinction of freedom. In Turkey, it resulted in a great increase of freedom."<sup>69</sup> Allen speech demonstrated once again how democratic sympathies merged with anti-Communism in the U.S.'s position vis-a-vis Turkey.

The U.S. celebrated the DP's electoral victory on May 14, 1950. The DP won the general elections and ousted the RPP government. The State Department viewed it a "victory for democracy." İnönü's role in this victory was not forgotten:

The part that President İnönü has played in guiding his countrymen to democratic government in an atmosphere of freedom and calm has earned him the respect of the democratic peoples of the world. The United States is confident that the new Government in Turkey will carry on the democratic tradition developed during his administration.<sup>70</sup>

In his letter of May 24, President Truman congratulated Celal Bayar on his election as President by the TGNA as follows:

That the Turkish people, through their newly elected representatives in the National Assembly, have bestowed upon you this highest of honors is indeed recognition of the significant role that you have long played in furthering the cause of democratic development in your country. Turkey has shown the world yet another evidence not only of its attachment to this cause, but of its inner strength and fundamental stability which has won it such a respected place within the family of democratic nations.<sup>71</sup>

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Independence," Ankara, May 19, 1949, *IAT*, roll 10.

<sup>69</sup> "Tribute to Turkish-American Relations: Address by George V. Allen, Ambassador-designate to Yugoslavia" *Department of State Bulletin* 21, no. 540 (November 7, 1949): 707.

<sup>70</sup> "Department Sees Turkish Elections as Victory for Democracy," *Department of State Bulletin* 221, no. 569 (May 29, 1950): 869.

<sup>71</sup> "President Truman to the President of the Turkish Republic (Bayar)," *FRUS*, 1950, Vol. V, 1263-4.

In more private considerations, Truman was less modest. In his diary entry of May 15, 1952, he exclaimed that “we saved Greece and Turkey.”<sup>72</sup> Several years later, he would write to a friend that he had “kept Stalin out of Greece and Turkey.”<sup>73</sup>

### 4.3 Conclusion

On June 25, 1950, the Korean War broke out. It became the first military conflict of the Cold War. The Turkish government quickly decided to show its friendship with the U.S. by sending troops. Just like in May, American policy-makers were jubilant, this time joined by public opinion. Assistant Secretary of State George McGhee called June 25, together with May 14, a day “which will long be remembered in Turkey, just as it will be remembered in the United States and in other countries of the free world.”<sup>74</sup> WCR Radio of New York City called Turkey’s offer “meaningful” as it was “sitting in front of the Soviet barrel.”<sup>75</sup> Estelle M. Sternberger of WLIB Radio reportedly suggested that Turkey’s enthusiasm, together with the fact that it was “ruled by a democratic government,” unlike its Arab neighbors, should translate into a non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council.<sup>76</sup>

Notwithstanding Americans’ enthusiasm, it was primarily President İnönü and Turkey’s Kemalist legacy that deserved credit for the transition to democracy. One can look at other undemocratic states in Europe and the Middle East that the U.S. supported at the onset of the Cold War. The U.S. consented to Portugal’s founding membership of NATO in 1949. Portugal was as undemocratic as Turkey,

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<sup>72</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 250.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>74</sup> George C. McGhee, “Turkey, the United States, and the Free World,” *Department of State Bulletin* 23, no. 592, (November 6, 1950): 739.

<sup>75</sup> Dr. Halim Alyot (Director General, Bureau of Press & Broadcast) to Basri Aktaş (Private Secretary to Prime Minister), “Report from Nuri Esen (Press Bureau, New York) on military aid to Korea (sent on July 28)” Ankara, August 5, 1950, *CA*, 30.01/102.630.8.

even more so at the time. Spain engaged in bilateral relations with the U.S. in the post-World War II era and Franco still retained his dictatorial regime. Iran was just another case. Thus, it is safe to assume that given Turkey's eagerness to become democratic, the U.S. was pleased but also worried with its "experiment." However, it is questionable whether the U.S. would have pushed Turkey to the point of losing it to the Soviet Union. The record suggests that primary U.S. interest in Turkey's internal politics was stability, not democratization. To be sure, Turkey's post-1923 political regime was an advantage in its dealings with the U.S. after the war. Overall, the American alliance eased but did not bring about Turkish democracy.

Turkish transition to democracy was neither a fully endogenous nor an exogenous affair. This chapter placed Turkey's transition to democracy in the context of Turkish-American relations from March 1947 until May 1950. It was argued that different than the 1945-47 period, the U.S. had a genuine interest in Turkish democracy and constantly referred to it. With President Truman declaring his doctrine and the Cold War, it is understandable that Turkey was presented in such a positive manner.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION: BRINGING THEM TOGETHER**

The relationship between Turkish democracy and Turkish-American relations from 1945 until 1950 is an interesting one. In contrast to Germany and Japan, where it led the transition to democracy, the U.S. acted as a complementary player in the Turkish case. The U.S. did not interfere with Turkish affairs, but showed an interest in its aim to democratize.

To be sure, that interest was predominated by strategic concerns. Primary U.S. interest in Turkey was geostrategy. As soon as World War II ended, the U.S. devised means to “contain” the Soviet Union. Turkey constituted “the stopper in the neck of the bottle through which Soviet political and military influence could most effectively flow into the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, until the Truman Doctrine, American interest in Turkish democracy was modest. Democracy was hardly mentioned when American policy-makers discussed Turkey while Greece was constantly praised for its democratic character.

The Truman Doctrine not only announced the Cold War, it also marked the change in U.S. attitudes towards Turkish democracy. Even though Turkey held comparatively free elections in 1946, it was only after the Truman Doctrine that its democratic character received American attention.

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<sup>1</sup> Loy W. Henderson, “Memorandum on Turkey,” Washington, October 21 1946, *IAT*, roll 1.

Students of Turkish-American relations and Turkish democracy have not shown interest in the connection between the two. The primary U.S. concern at the onset of the Cold War was to keep the Soviet Union out of Turkey, an indispensable asset in American strategic calculations.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Turkish leaders' democratic credentials, particularly those of Atatürk and İnönü, were the triggering factors for democratization. The Turkish revolution, pushed through Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's reforms from 1923 until 1938 and carried on by his friend and successor İsmet İnönü, was the main reason for democratization.

This thesis argued that the U.S. was genuinely interested in Turkey's democratization, but did not exert pressure on Turkey to that end. Turkey was moving in that direction since 1923. In Karpas's words, "the transition of Turkey's one-party regime to a multi-party system was prepared...by the liberal concepts at the foundation of the Republic." The actual transition came through "the decision of the Republican Party government under the direct influence of İnönü."<sup>3</sup>

In the first chapter of the thesis, it was argued that there was a need to reevaluate the relationship between Turkish-American relations and Turkish democracy. In the second chapter, the thesis reconsidered Kemalism's relation to democracy. The two schools of thought on Kemalism and Turkey's republican experience were analyzed. It was argued that the first group looked at Kemalism as an authoritarian regime. In leading scholar Feroz Ahmad's words, the Turkish system after 1923 was based on a loose "alliance between the urban middle class and the intelligentsia, army officials, state officials, the landowners, and notables of

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<sup>2</sup> Melvyn Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945-1952," *The Journal of American History* 71, No. 4. (Mar., 1985): 807-825.

<sup>3</sup> Kemal Karpas, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 137.

Anatolia.”<sup>4</sup> Elections were held in the country periodically, but only RPP candidates were allowed to run. The people never elected their representatives directly, but only the electoral colleges that decided the result. This second group argued that Kemalist ideology essentially aimed at building democracy in the country. Kemal Karpas asserts that “the transition of Turkey’s one-party regime to a multi-party system was prepared...by the liberal concepts at the foundation of the Republic,” which finally became a reality through “the decision of the Republican Party government under the direct influence of İnönü.”<sup>5</sup> The thesis sided with the second group’s position that Kemalism was intrinsically democratic.

The second chapter also looked at the historiography on Turkish-American relations and U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War. It was held that primary U.S. interest in Turkey during the Cold War was geostrategy. The U.S. was eager to thwart perceived Soviet expansion into the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean. That was why the U.S. improved its relations with Turkey.

Finally, the second chapter looked at previous attempts to link Turkish democratization from 1945 until 1950 and Turkish-American relations. Both Paul Henze’s thesis that Turkish democratization did not receive any interest by American policy-makers and Hakan Yılmaz’s assertion that Turkish policy-makers used democratization to secure their entry into the “Western club” were challenged. The thesis argued that the actual connection between Turkish democratization and Turkish-American relations was not one of cause and effect. Yet, the U.S. was aware of Turkish democratization and did not pressure Turkey. For their part, Turkish

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<sup>4</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy, 1950-1975* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1977), 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Kemal Karpas, *Turkey’s Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 137.

leaders perceived democracy as the zenith of their Westernization and another step to honor Atatürk's legacy.

In the third chapter, the thesis looked at the parallel evolution of Turkish democratization and Turkish-American relations from 1945 until 1947. Especially during this period, Turkish democratization only received modest attention by the U.S. That changed with the Truman Doctrine in 1947.

The fourth chapter looked at how Turkish democratization came to the forefront in American policy-makers' considerations. With the Truman Doctrine, the U.S. began to formulate its foreign policy in line with anti-Communism. In Turkey's case, efforts to democratize were hailed as how successful the U.S. was.

To be sure, U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War was not that "successful." Writing at the time, American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr had doubts about the idealism of U.S. foreign policy:

Communists use power without scruple because they are under the illusion that their conception of an unambiguously ideal end justifies such use. Our own culture is schizophrenic upon the subject of power...Sometimes it verges on that curious combination of cynicism and idealism which characterizes communism, and is prepared to use any means without scruple to achieve its desired end.<sup>6</sup>

Democracy fell apart under a military coup in Turkey in 1960. The U.S. kept working with the military government. Even though a retransition to democracy would come about, it would break down twice more in 1971 and 1980. In these instances, the U.S. maintained its relations with Turkey. Elsewhere in the world, it would support regimes even more undemocratic than Turkey's military-backed governments.

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<sup>6</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1952), 6.



To be fair, the period from 1945 until 1950 marked a shining episode in Turkish-American relations and Turkish democracy. It must be conceded that the U.S. was, after all, an “empire by invitation.” The decision of Turkish policy-makers to diverge from the Soviet Union and align with the U.S. yielded a favorable result. In this instance, U.S. foreign policy perhaps worked.

Convergence with the U.S. also resonated with Turkey’s determination to modernize and Westernize. Turkish statesmen and intellectuals saw democracy and the U.S. partnership as the modernization of their country. “Western democracy” became a catchword in the second half of the 1940s. The Turkish transition to democracy occurred while the Cold War was in motion.

American mistrust of the Soviet Union and Stalin’s imprudent foreign policy after the war came as a blessing in disguise for Turkey. Turkey’s convergence with the U.S. enabled its accession to NATO in 1952. Its democracy was obviously a complementary factor. Following the Truman Doctrine, Turkish democracy was progressively hailed by American policy-makers. Along with its involvement in the Korean War, Turkey not only became a strategic asset, but also a prized symbol as to how “victorious” U.S. foreign policy could be in “containing” the Soviets.

The episode studied in this thesis is not only relevant to the history of the Cold War. “Westernization” and “modernization” are themes emphasized by Turks even today. Following the European Union summit of October 2004, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called his country’s EU bid a “struggle of civilization” (*medeniyet mücadelesi*). Just as the institution of a “Western” type of democracy and alignment with the U.S.-led Western world seemed like the only option for Turkish policy-makers sixty years ago, Kemal Derviş, head of the United Nations

Development Program and formerly a cabinet minister, called Turkey's full membership in the EU "the only possible option."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Derviş: Türkiye'nin ve AB'nin Tek Şansı 'Tam Üyelik'" (Derviş: 'Full Membership' Only Option for Turkey and EU), *Hürriyet*, May 20, 2005, 9.

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